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**Transition  
A Conversation with Parents**

**A Guide for Individuals with  
Disabilities, their Parents, and the  
Professionals Dedicated to  
Serving Them 1st Edition.**

**Adam S.U. Gottdank, Ph.D.  
Linda O'Neal, M.A.  
Casey Sousa, M.S.**

## Transition, A Conversation with Parents

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#### FORWARD

##### My Friend Luke

My name is Bella. My friend Luke and his sisters, Sophia and Olivia, are like cousins to my brother and me. We spend time with him whenever we can, and always have a great time together. Luke is 11 years old and has Down's syndrome. Luke is included in whatever we do, and we don't treat him any differently because he has a disability. Luke is the funny one out of all of us. He is like a comedian the way he always cracks us up. My favorite things about Luke are that he is funny, sweet, always fun to be around, and I always have a fun time with him. A few examples of my favorite memories with Luke are playing with my toys in my room on New Year's Eve together, going trick or treating on Halloween, and many occasions of playing around in the pool.

I am thirteen years old. I am looking forward to moving out after high school and college. I am hoping to choose my own roommates, for example my current friends from middle school. I want to live close to my family unless I get accepted into a college where I have to move away for a bit. I want to get my first job at a store or a restaurant like Luna Grill, Pick Up Stix, or Golden Spoon Yogurt. I am looking forward to having my own money to spend on things that I want. I hope that my roommates and I cook, bake, take trips, do some art, and watch TV and movies together. I am definitely not looking forward to having to do chores.

I have thought a lot about what Luke will be like when he grows up. I think he should make his own decisions, with of course some input from his parents. I want Olivia and Sophia to continue to hang out with Luke when they are all grown up. I think they should help him out with some relationship advice. I can see Luke moving out if that is what he wants to do... of course! I can see Luke working in a job helping people, or he would even be a great movie star! Luke and I will be friends forever. I am looking forward to meeting him at his apartment, to hang out, go out to eat, and watch movies with him. Most of all, I want Luke to always be happy!

*Bella Kei Udouch Gottdank*



Whenever I see Luke, I immediately forget whatever I am thinking about, and prepare for a fun time. I love how whenever he sees me, I can spot a grin slowly stretching across his face. This mirrors, I am sure, my own facial expression. Whether I am giving



him a piggyback ride, feigning clumsiness for his amusement, or helping him assemble a toy, there is always plenty of laughing and fun. I have known Luke since I was very little, and he has known me since birth. Since I was so young, I did not know that Luke was different. When I was old enough to know, it didn't really matter. The bond of friendship, of family, was already rock solid. Luke is one of the few treasures of this world, one of the real ones, the ones that matter. He is as

close as a brother to me. If he needed help, all he would need to do is ask me. In his future, I am certain that he can achieve his dreams, as he is so full of energy that I doubt any obstacle could obstruct him for long.

*Benci Christopher Udouch Gottdank*

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*This book was inspired by the numerous conversations Adam had with students and their families. Thank you students and parents! Thank you Linda and Casey for elevating the book to a whole new level!*

“I wish I would have known about transition earlier!” I have heard so many parents and families tell me this over the years! This guide is intended to help individuals with disabilities, their families, and dedicated professionals understand the transition from childhood to adulthood. This book provides an extensive outline of the many things you need to know. I have attempted to strike a balance between providing enough detail to really understand how things work, while being concise enough so that families who may not have a lot of spare time to read, can easily access the information they need.

It is my intention that this book will help start a conversation about transition and provide families the information they need to successfully navigate the changes that come with it. As you read through this book you may notice that I lean towards promoting the most independent environment possible for all individuals with disabilities. Throughout my career I have found that most individuals, whether they have a disability or not, want the same things after high school; the ability to live, work, and be included in their



community. This is something I highly value and encourage, and you will notice that theme throughout this book. It is important to note that I am employed through North Orange County Community College District at North Orange Continuing Education and therefore, I have a bias towards our school and programs. It is my goal to share the many resources and options available for individuals with disabilities in preparing for transition

and to share the many wonderful programs offered within our district. The information provided in this book is written to assist all individuals with disabilities, however, there is a slight focus on individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other cognitive and developmental disabilities. My hope is that it will be

helpful for you and your family as you prepare for a successful transition to a fulfilling and quality life.

**Documents identified throughout this guide can be found at the following:**  
[Transition Document Hub.](#)

## **ADULT TO ADULT RELATIONSHIP**

Just like any other parent, one day you will be building an adult to adult relationship with your adult daughter or son. The nature of your relationship with your child will change. Your child’s disability will play a role in this transition to adulthood, but it will not stop the transition. The purpose of this section is not to push how fast that transition happens. Each person and their parents are going to experience the transition in a unique way. Many parents and students have told me that when they shifted their thinking from an adult - child perspective to an adult – adult viewpoint, that it made a huge difference in how they related and responded to their adult child.

### **The parent's role in college life**

Your role in your adult child’s life will change when your child goes to college and postsecondary schools. You have often been the decision maker in individualized planning meetings such as IEPs for your child. There may have been times where your child did not even attend the meetings. When your adult child transitions, they are the one who is responsible for their college education (Note: I will use the word college to represent postsecondary education/training opportunities in general). In college, faculty, staff, and counselors will follow your child’s lead on their educational goal, and your child will have to follow the policies and procedures of the college.

The transition from child to adult can be a difficult, confusing and tense time. An adult student now has the right and responsibility to make decisions about classes they take, the supports used, and the information they share with parents. This can be a very frustrating transition, or one that is filled with excitement and new opportunities. I encourage families to talk about the changing roles and for parents and adult students to discuss their wishes and expectations for communication and interaction during this time. If you and your adult student are having trouble navigating these changes, I would encourage you to seek help through family counseling or other community resources. Orange County resources can be found at [211 Orange County](#).



### **Hints for parents**

I have had many parents respond to the idea that they are not the decision maker for their adult children, by saying things like, “Fine! I will just back off and not do anything.” While others have shared, “I don’t care what the college policies say, I’m coming to campus and they are going to talk with me because I’m the parent!” The truth is that most adults with disabilities work very closely with their families on planning and for

making decisions. The college faculty and staff will be in the student's life for a few short years, and family members will be supportive of their loved one the rest of their lives.

I suggest a model that strongly supports independence while acknowledging the family member's on-going role in their loved one's life. Self-Determination Skills are essential to all successful adults and it is equally important to promote the development of these skills in individuals with disabilities. Self-determined people make things happen in their lives. They are goal oriented and apply problem-solving and decision-making skills to guide their actions. They know what they do well and where they need assistance. These skills are not automatically learned. They require ongoing learning and repeated practice. The capabilities needed to become self-determined are most effectively learned through real-world experience, which involves taking risks, making mistakes, and reflecting on outcomes. (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). These skills include:



- Choice Making
- Goal Setting & Attainment
- Self-Awareness & Self Knowledge
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Conflict Resolution
- Self-Management & Regulation
- Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy & Leadership

Please see the [California Career Innovations \(CCI\) Self-Determination Skills Chart](#).

Your adult child with a disability needs to practice and learn these skills. One way for you to support the success of your student is to facilitate the use of these skills at home, school, in the community and in the workplace. I recommend that you develop a philosophy that your adult children are quite capable of doing things for themselves. This would apply to any child you have, whether they have a disability or not. Once you adopt this philosophy, it starts to guide your decision making.



Communication with college instructors and administrative staff provides a wealth of examples of this shift to promoting independence, as follows:

- Many parents choose to call or email instructors before giving their adult child the opportunity to communicate first. Have your adult child make the phone call and

leave a message. You can always leave a second phone message if you think your child’s message was unclear.

- Have your child send email communications to instructors and college staff. They can cc you on the communication if they want to keep you in the loop.
- Another strategy your daughter or son can use is to draft emails that they wish to send to their instructors i.e. to ask a question or clarify an issue. They can draft the email, and then let you read the draft and make recommendations before they send the email note (but do not take their seat and edit the note for them!).

These examples put your child in the, “driver’s seat,” empowers them to take responsibility for themselves, and still keeps you in the loop so that you have a better idea on how to help them navigate the wide array of issues they will encounter in their postsecondary lives.

Please refer to the following Self-Advocacy Documents developed by Disability Rights California (DRC) & the Orange County Local Partnership Agreement (OCLPA) Leadership Team:



- [15 Tips for Self-Advocates](#)
- [15 Tips for Parent & Family Member advocates](#)



For more information on promoting and supporting the development of self-advocacy skills, please see the following document by the National Center for Learning Disabilities:

[“Agents of their own successes: Self- Advocacy Skills and Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities in the Era of Personalized Learning”](#),



### **Parent to Parent, Support Groups**

One of the most important things that I tell parents and professionals is, “Connect parents to parents!” Even if you have an outstanding college counselor, or case carrier for a social services type of agency, you cannot beat other parents and families for great information and ideas! There are many support groups that focus on a particular area of disability e.g. autism spectrum disorder, Down’s Syndrome, ADHD, and learning disability. Support groups offer families the opportunity to meet many families who have loved ones with similar needs.



There are other ways to connect with parents. For example, one local regional center has vendored with United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) to provide, “Parent Connection.” This is a program that matches parents with similar needs. Families can

meet and discuss issues that they are experiencing and get real world solutions from other parents who have already experienced a given issue or need. Many parents can meet other families who have loved ones that attend the same high school Adult Transition Program, day program, college, and recreation event.

Here are some examples of other family support groups in Orange County:



- [Comfort Connections/Regional Center of Orange County](#)
- [OC Asperger Support Group](#)
- [Down Syndrome Association of Orange County](#)
- [Family Autism Network](#)
- [The ARC for People with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [NAMI Family Support Group](#)
- [UCP of Orange County Family Support Services](#)
- [Irvine Residents with Disabilities \(IRDAB\)](#)
- [Mariners Church Exceptional Families](#)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of California-Santa Ana](#)

Really good case managers and counselors will be happy that you brought an idea to them that you learned from another parent or family. There is so much information out there, and so many resources available, it is not always possible for case managers and counselors to know about them all. If you bring new ideas and resources to your case manager or counselor, they may be able to share that information to help other families. Never hesitate to ask about ideas or resources you have learned about from other parents.

### **Conservatorship**

Conservatorship is a process which involves a person (often parents) going to court with a person who has a disability and requesting that a judge approve the parent's or petitioner's request that they have the right to make decisions in one or more areas of a person's life.



**[There are several types of conservatorships and alternatives as outlined in Disability Rights California, 10/2015 Publication #5578.01](#)**



For example, a conservator might have the right to make decisions about education, medical needs, day programs, and living options. Some parents are unaware of conservatorship, while others are under the misperception that it is their duty to become a conservator. As a professional, I do not make recommendations one way or the other regarding whether a person should be conserved. Obtaining a conservatorship is a personal decision made between the person with a disability and their loved ones. It is important for people to know that when they obtain a conservatorship over their adult child, they are taking away some of their loved one’s rights. A bias that I do have is that I encourage individuals with disabilities to become as independent as possible.

I have seen conservators use the conservatorship as a means to decrease a person’s independence, and I have seen other conservators use it as a way to increase their



loved one’s independence. I know that independence does not come without purposeful intent by both the individual with the disability and their family. My recommendation for parents who are considering conservatorship is to talk with families who really believe in conservatorship, and those who are totally against conservatorship. This process will help individuals and their families develop a well-rounded understanding of conservatorship. Another important idea to consider is that conservatorship may grant a right to make a decision, but it does not guarantee enforcement. For example, a conservator who has the right to make educational decisions would have the right to pick classes at a postsecondary institution for their loved one. However, if the adult student chose not to go to a class that they did not want, the school would not have any enforcement authority.

Many adults with disabilities, though not all, have close relationships with their parents, and make decisions with input from their family. They often consult with their families whether they are conserved or not. Conservatorship does not always guarantee compliance and open communication; it is a tool that can be used to promote or hinder independence. I encourage families to have open communication about conservatorship and what it might mean for the individual with a disability and their loved ones. General alternatives to conservatorship include Supported Decision Making, Durable Power of Attorney and Self-Advocacy.

**[Additional information is available in Disability Rights California, 10/2015 Publication #5578.01](#)**

In order for a Conservator to act in the persons behalf, they need to provide an official copy of the “Letter of Conservatorship” to the service agency. The official copy must include the completed certification section before they can be treated as the conservator.

### **High School Student vs. College Student**

There are some important differences between high school and college that students with disabilities and their families need to know. Many of the processes, procedures, and laws applicable to high school are already familiar to many of you. The Multidisciplinary Team completes evaluations to determine eligibility for Special Education Services (based on an identified area of disability). The school district develops an IEP and/or 504 Plan to define educational goals, services, and supports. School districts provide assessments at no charge to students



and families. The Multidisciplinary Team develops an IEP outlining goals, objectives, and services. Students receive instruction in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as determined by the Multidisciplinary Team. Eligibility for Special Education services is reviewed annually. Teachers, administrators, faculty, and parents advocate for students. Parents are notified and must give permission for any decisions regarding their child. High School Adult Transition programs that focus on skills needed for work, living independently, and community integration are available for some students between the age of 18 and 22. Students who exit K-12 programs are not eligible to return, unless the IEP process is used to re-establish eligibility.



The processes, procedures, and laws applicable to high school do not apply to college. Students must self-identify their area of disability to receive services through Disability Support Services (DSS). The student and DSS Counselor utilize an interactive process to identify educational limits, develop goals, and determine reasonable accommodations. Students provide school and medical records to DSS Faculty for the purpose of verifying

their disability. There is no IEP. Students establish their own academic plans, set educational goals, and develop an Academic Accommodations Plan (AAP) with support

from DSS and Academic Counselors. DSS staff work closely with students and instructional faculty to ensure access and to implement reasonable accommodations (Academic Adjustments, Auxiliary Aids and Services). Verification of an area of disability is generally required one time as long as the student remains enrolled. Each student must advocate for themselves. The student makes decisions about their education and services, and they must give consent for their parents to be involved. By law, professionals cannot reveal information about a student to parents, family members, or anyone else without the student’s consent. Reasonable accommodations and support services are required. Special classes and programs may be offered but are not mandated.

Please see the [“Differences between High School & College for Students with Disabilities”](#) chart. This chart describes the differences in applicable law, required documentation, self-advocacy, parental role, instruction, grades, tests, and study responsibilities.

## TRANSITION

### When should I start thinking about transition?

My recommendation to families is to gather as much information as possible about transition. The world of postsecondary education typically refers to “transition” as the time when children move from the child service delivery system (K-12 schools often being the primary focus for children) to the adult service delivery system. This will be a large focus of this section, however, individuals with disabilities move through many transitions throughout their lives just like the rest of us. It is important to both stay in the moment (focus on current services and needs) and to plan ahead for future needs.



Transition is easier when parents learn about it as their child grows up and start to coordinate services when their child is in their teenage years. It is not too early to start thinking about transition even during the pre-school and elementary school years! Families who wait until their child is an adult, or just about to graduate from their K-12 school district, tend to be overwhelmed with transition. Early planning enables individuals and their families to avoid having to apply for services from many agencies at the same time, allows people to visit adult programs at their own pace, and permits time to ask questions and explore options.

Each year the Orange County Department of Education, in cooperation with the Regional Center of Orange County, publishes an [“Orange County Transition Planning Resource Directory: Programs for Adults with Developmental Disabilities”](#), J. Almaraz, OCDE, 2019. This directory includes descriptions and contact information for many postsecondary training and employment programs.



For more information please refer to [“The Journey to Life After High School A Roadmap for Parents of Children with Disabilities”](#), D, Slater. R.M.

Paquin, Ability Path.org., 2014. Whether you have a child in middle school, high school, or a young adult, this tool that may be beneficial to you as you look towards the future.



## **K-12 Schools, Transition, and Summary of Performance**

Many of you who read this guide will already be familiar with Special Education services and processes. Special Education services are not the focus of this book. There are some K-12 topics that will be discussed such as working with service agencies, and programs, Summary of Performance, and Adult Transition Programs.

There are families who stop looking for additional resources for their children with disabilities when they start grade school. This happens for several reasons. Many services are often provided through the school district. Your child may be followed by a case carrier who monitors your child’s case closely, coordinates services through the school district, and serves as the point person for your child. Your child may receive a variety of special services through their school such as occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech therapy, behavioral support and intervention, counseling, and assessment. They might receive specialized instruction in various settings such as a Special Day Class (SDC), Resource Specialist Program (RSP), or the general education classroom with an instructional aide. School may serve as respite from the continuous care your child needs. Many families are so well served by the school that they do not feel the need to pursue other services or resources.

Families often struggle with transition because it feels like it comes on fast, and there is too much information, too many resources to explore, and too little time to figure out the best choices for your loved one. My recommendation is to be aware of the resources available at all ages, and to tap into resources that become available along the way.

There are far too many programs and services available to include an exhaustive list in this book, however, there are key ways to get good information quickly. One of your best strategies for identifying resources is to consult with other families! This does not mean you will always get the best or most accurate information from a given family. Families can tell you what they know, and what they have experienced. It is always best to take information that you have learned from a family and check it out for yourself. Each person with a disability is unique, and each family experiences life differently. That being said, there are many common experiences. Hearing other families talk about their successes and their difficulties with obtaining services for their loved ones will give you ideas. You might be able to avoid the pit falls other people have endured, and successfully connect with resources more quickly because others have educated you on their experiences.

Connecting with other families can happen in many ways. A school-based support system can develop easily by taking advantage of the opportunities to talk with other parents when you see them at your child’s school. Support groups have been established to help individuals and families based on specific areas of disability. Groups meet regularly and share experiences and resources. Topics will include issues that are common to most people with disabilities, as well as subjects that may be more disability specific. Examples of disability specific support groups include autism spectrum disorder, Down’s Syndrome, attention deficit disorder, William’s Syndrome, and learning disabilities. Many support groups will sponsor social gatherings so that families can mingle in a setting that is more casual. One Regional Center in California (RCOC) established Parent Connection with United Cerebral Palsy (UCP). Parent Connection was set up specifically so that Service Coordinators from that organization could help parents on their caseloads connect with other families who have gone through similar experiences. The more experienced family would then help the other parents identify needed resources, programs, and coping strategies.

There are many professionals that can help, but I started with parents because they are such a rich supply of knowledge, experience, and empathy. Other people who can help you identify resources, programs, and services include special education teachers, counselors, school psychologists, case managers, community centers, coaches, recreation centers, nurses, and doctors. Through the Regional Center, individuals who have developmental disabilities will have access to a Service Coordinator who is available to provide advocacy, support, and coordination of services across the lifespan (see below for more details).

On-line resources are vast. Many support groups have on-line websites and social media platforms. You can spend hours researching information about various disabilities, medical conditions, and medical procedures. Many programs and service organizations offer extensive websites outlining their programming. State and federal governmental agencies such as the California Department of Rehabilitation and the California Department of Developmental Services offer information, brochures and links to legislation, local programs, and advocacy groups. Consider connecting with the following websites for additional information:



- [California Department of Education \(CDE\)](#)
- [California Department of Developmental Services \(DDS\)](#)
- [California Department of Rehabilitation \(DOR\)](#)



Secondary Transition Services is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability. These services begin no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined by the IEP Team and are updated annually. The IEP includes measurable postsecondary goals based upon age

appropriate assessments related to training, education, employment and independent living skills, and the transition services needed to help the student reach these goals.



The Summary of Performance (SOP) is required under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The language as stated in IDEA 2004 regarding the SOP is as follows: For a child whose eligibility under special education terminates due to graduation with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age of eligibility, the local education agency “shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance,

which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals” §Sec. 300.305(e)(3). The Summary of Performance, with the accompanying documentation, is important to assist the student in the transition from high school to higher education, training and/or employment. This information is necessary under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act to help establish a student’s eligibility for reasonable accommodations and supports in postsecondary settings. It is useful for the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive Assessment process. The information about students’ current level of functioning is intended to help postsecondary institutions consider accommodations for access. These recommendations should not imply that any individual who qualified for special education in high school will automatically qualify for services in the postsecondary education or the employment setting. Postsecondary settings will continue to make eligibility decisions on a case-by-case basis.

The SOP must be completed during the final year of a student’s high school education. A timeline for completion of the SOP may vary depending on the student’s postsecondary goals. If a student is transitioning to higher education, the SOP, with additional documentation, may be necessary as the student applies to a college or university. The SOP information will be needed as a student applies for services from state agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, called Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) in California. In some instances, it may be most appropriate to wait until the spring of a student’s final year to complete the SOP so that an agency or employer will receive the most updated information on the performance of the student. (Please See the [SOP FAQ](#) and [SOP Summary from the National Technical Center on Transition](#).)



### **Adult Transition Program**

Special education services for students with IEPs end when they graduate with a regular high school diploma or when they reach the maximum age for receiving special

education services. The maximum age in California is 22. This means that your child is allowed to take high school/adult transition classes, approved through the IEP, until they are 22 years old. Some adult students prefer to take courses at a community college. Please work with the staff from your local community college Disability Support Services program to determine the availability of classes.

The primary law that governs Special Education, and that mandates a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA established that individuals with disabilities could be eligible for an adult transition program (ATP). Each high school or K-12 school district is responsible for establishing their own ATP, and these programs may vary in name, focus, curriculum, and programming. A common focus of adult transition programs is helping students with ID, ASD, and similar disabilities learn the skills they need to work, integrate into their community, and live more independently.

A common planning tool used to assist with overall transition planning efforts is called the Person-Driven or Person-Centered Planning (PDP/PCP) Process. PDP/PCP is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. Groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. This "person-directed" team meets to identify opportunities for the student to develop personal relationships, participate in their community, increase control over their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities needed to achieve their goals. PDP depends on the commitment of a team of individuals, including families, friends, Regional Center, schools, and other agencies who care about the student. These individuals take action to make sure that the strategies discussed in planning meetings are implemented (Please see some [PDP examples & resources](#)). Coordination of services across agencies will promote improved communication among the individual, their family, and their service agencies to ensure effective, cost efficient and quality services to promote work-based learning, education, and employment preparation.



Should your child attend an adult transition program? This has become a more complicated question in recent years. Previously it seemed like students who were eligible for ATP would attend from age 18-22. They would then graduate and move on to a variety of adult programs and services after the age of 22.

I am a big fan of adult transition programs. The law mandates these services. It is an extra 4 years of education! Students with ID, ASD, and other similar cognitive disabilities go through a maturity process that typically mirrors the maturity process of their peers who do not have disabilities. Often the maturity process takes a little longer, but the maturity students go through from age 18 to age 30 is amazing! Therefore, if a

student attends their adult transition program until age 22, and then attends college or another postsecondary institution, they are often in their mid to late 20s when they transition to work and living independently. This means that they typically are much more mature, have a better education, and more life experiences that will lead them to success with work and living on their own!

Some students are no longer attending ATPs. Some are opting to leave school before their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, so that they can leave high school with a diploma instead of a certificate of completion or accomplishment. Students often choose this option because they view the diploma as more

prestigious. They often believe that they will need the diploma to secure a good job. Many schools will not offer an adult transition program if a student chooses to graduate with a diploma. Families have shared with me, “We had no choice. They had my child on ‘diploma tract’ and never talked about a transition program.” Other families have told me that the school wanted them to choose between “diploma” or “certificate” tract.



Families sometimes feel they had to make the choice before they truly knew the value of each option. Some students will not be offered an ATP because they truly meet all the graduation requirements for a diploma, and their transition options are to look at college and postsecondary schools whether or not they have developed the academic or social readiness skills for higher education.

It is important to keep in mind that services are not automatically initiated for students served by Regional Center when they exit the secondary or adult transition program prior to their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. You need to discuss options with your RCOC Services Coordinator prior to making a decision to leave the secondary school system.

The choice to attend, or to skip, an adult transition program is a personal one. A student and their family need to figure out what is best for them. This is another example of why I believe that it is never too early to plan for transition. I recommend to families that they research all their options, and make sure they are clear on the pros and cons of attending, or choosing not to attend, their adult transition program. Visit the ATP in your district. Take full advantage of the program if you like what is offered. If the transition



program is not what your family is looking for then ask about other options that the district might offer. The individualized transition plan (ITP), just like the IEP, is intended to be a plan that meets your child’s “individualized” needs. Put your ideas on the table. If you have visited transition programs at other schools that you think better meet your loved one’s needs, share



those ideas with your child’s school district. If you start the transition planning several years before your child is ready to transition, and you network with other parents, you may be able to share ideas with the school district that could help them to evolve their ATP to better meet the needs of students (including your child)!

A high school diploma is wonderful, but students and parents need to understand the trade-offs with choosing the diploma over the certificate of completion. Students in California who have a developmental disability, and who are eligible for Regional Center and Department of Rehabilitation services, are going to be eligible for workforce preparation and supported employment programs (discussed more extensively below). These programs can help students get jobs even though they do not have a diploma. Your loved one still will have graduated from high school, and these programs offer a lot of expertise at helping students obtain employment. The diploma is great, but it may not affect your child’s ability to get a job if they opt for a certificate and the ATP. The additional years of school through the ATP are intended to focus on employment preparation, work-based learning, and support for the development of independent living skills.

Some students and families have said, “Why should I do the adult transition program when I can just enroll in college?” There are families who are aware of the programs offered by North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE) in the North Orange County Community College District (NOCCCD) and feel that they do not need their high school ATP (see below for a

description of programs offered through NOCE). There are students who are ready for postsecondary education or college. They are mature enough, they have good local options, their academic skills are good (or good enough to get started), and there are enough services and support available for them to be successful. The key is to start planning early so that your



adult child has a clearer idea regarding their readiness for college, and to ensure that they have the necessary services and supports that will help them to be successful. Often that extra 4 years of ATP gives the student more time to plan, while gaining many skills that help them become more independent and successful at the college level. Students can wait the entire 4 years before they transition from the ATP, or some ATPs are now helping students split their time between the school district’s adult transition program and postsecondary institutions. This often provides an ideal, gradual transition that gives students and families the best of both worlds.

## **Regional Center Services & Supports:**

There are specific eligibility requirements that must be met to receive services and supports from Regional Centers. Please see the RCOC website for more information. [Regional Center of Orange County \(RCOC\)](#)



There are some special transition considerations for those students who are eligible for Regional Center services. I have heard many times from families who insist that Regional Center cannot, or will not, provide any services before the age of 22. This is simply not true, and a misunderstanding of the law. A person who qualifies for Regional Center services is generally eligible for their entire life. The individual and their family need to remember that the primary job of Regional Center is coordination. RCs pay for some services, but the law mandates that the Regional Center helps the individual with a disability and their family coordinate services.

Service coordination includes the mandate to help individuals identify and utilize what Regional Center calls “generic” resources. A generic resource is a service, program or resource that is available to the person with a disability, and that RC does not fund. The law says that Regional Centers should not fund services that other organizations and agencies are required to provide. If a family asks for the RC to pay for a service that the RC believes should be covered by the adult transition program, then RC is most likely not going to be able to pay for that service. An individual and their family would need to provide justification as to why the K-12 District cannot provide a service or support before RC would consider funding. Regional Center might fund for services such as respite or in-home behavior support because they would not expect the school to pay for those services. On the other hand, if a family wants RC to pay for a day program 5 days per week from age 18 to 22, and the RC believes the individual is eligible for ATP, the RC would have a difficult time justifying the spending of those resources.

Keep in mind that the adult transition programs throughout Orange County provide excellent programs with a focus on preparation for adult life including employment and independent living skills development. I recommend that families always invite their RC service coordinator (SC) to their child's IEP/ITP meetings. The SC can provide advocacy, clarify information about the adult transition program, help the family articulate needs and make requests. Inclusion of the RC service coordinator in all planning activities makes it easier to support the family. An example will help to illustrate the point. Regional Center will have a difficult time supporting a family's request to fund a day program when the student is 18 years old if the family has never invited the service coordinator to meetings with the school. The assumption the SC will make is that the school should be providing an appropriate program during the day until the student is 22 years old. If the SC has not been a part of the discussions, they will not have a clear understanding of why the school's program will not work. They would not have had the opportunity to help the family advocate for more appropriate programming.

The description below provides a different scenario that would give RC the opportunity to support the family more effectively.

Let us say that the student is 13 years old and the family has always brought the Service Coordinator to planning meetings. The SC would already be aware of any concerns the family had regarding the school and the adult transition program. This will enable the SC to work with the family to find a solution. An ideal solution might be the SC and family working together to have the ATP modify programming to better meet the needs of the individual with a disability. Starting these discussions when the student still has several years before transition means there is plenty of time to talk and to implement changes. The family can ask the SC to incorporate their dreams, goals and plans into the RC Individualized Program Plan (IPP). Including the service coordinator in the transition discussions over several years means that RC either supports the family's plans or must let the family know that they will not be able to support what the family wants. This clarity for the family is extremely important. There is no guarantee that RC will pay for the day program if the ATP does not make changes to support what the family wants. However, the family is on much stronger ground to ask RC to fund for a program if they have always included the SC in planning, and if the family and the SC have been working with the school for several years on a plan to meet the individual's needs.

## **APPLYING TO COLLEGES & POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS**

There will be a lot of planning and many considerations for your adult child who has a disability when they plan to go to college. Many procedures will be similar to anyone who applies to college, while other aspects of going to school as an adult can be very different. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs special education for the K-12 system, and guarantees a, "free and appropriate public education." IDEA does not apply to college and postsecondary schools. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title V regulations are examples of laws that apply to postsecondary education (Please see: ["Differences between High School and College" Chart](#)).

### **When do I apply to college?**

Exploring college options during one's Junior year in high school, and then applying to college during the Fall of their Senior year, is a fairly common practice. Students should pay attention to the timelines for any given school or college they are interested in attending. Be mindful of college related information being released by your high school counseling office and school district. This information may include timelines, workshops, and planning opportunities available at your campus.

Additional enrollment information is readily available on college websites. I highly recommend taking college tours and scheduling early appointments with college counselors. Counselors and other college staff can help you make sure that you know deadlines and follow established procedures. I recommend starting the college planning process very early for families who have a loved one with a disability. There are many

additional factors for students with disabilities, and the rest of this section will be used to address many of these considerations.

### **Disability Support Services (DSS)**

Most college campuses have a Disability Support Services (DSS) office. The name of the office may vary from campus to campus. Other common names include Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS), Accessibility Center, Accessibility Resources and Services, and Office of Accessibility. Students are not required to disclose that they have a disability, nor are they required to access services through DSS. Postsecondary institutions are required to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have disclosed to the institution that they have a disability, and where the disability has been verified. The most common way to do this is to complete an intake with a DSS counselor.

There are a number of ways to document and verify that a student has a disability. Title V regulations that govern postsecondary schools in California can be very specific about how to verify a disability, and schools are well served by doing their best to maintain records within the Title V expectations. The ADA would encourage faculty and staff to work with students to make verification of disability and access to services and accommodations as simple as possible. DSS counselors and coordinators will often utilize assessment reports from the K-12 specialists such as the school psychologist, and therapists (speech, occupational, physical) to verify an area of disability. This is one situation, where information contained in the Summary of Performance (SOP) provided by your high school or ATP may come in handy. Common names for assessment include the Triennial Assessment Team Report, Psychoeducational Evaluation, and Multidisciplinary Team Report. Students who have learning disabilities (LD) might receive an updated LD assessment from a community college LD specialist. Student often bring in reports from their medical doctors, neurologists, or psychiatrist. Colleges typically have a disability verification (DV) form that students can give to their medical doctor of psychiatrist to verify medical, physical, and mental health disabilities. Some agencies like Regional Centers, Department of Rehabilitation and County Social Services may have reports that student can give to DSS offices that can be used to verify an area of eligibility.



## **Reasonable Accommodations and Support Services**

Students with disabilities who attend college and postsecondary institutions will be eligible for reasonable accommodations and a variety of support services (Academic Adjustments, Auxiliary Aids and Services). They will typically meet with a DSS counselor to discuss academic and vocational goals, and the accommodations they need to be successful in school. Postsecondary institutions do not follow IDEA, and modification of the curriculum is not typically considered a reasonable accommodation. Colleges follow the ADA and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Academic integrity is considered critical to college institutions, and any accommodation that appears to jeopardize academic integrity will not be supported or approved by the institution.

Approval of accommodations and support services is based on the person's area of disability, and the educational limits related to the disability. The student and counselor



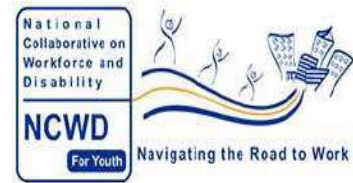
typically work together through the “interactive process” to identify the educational limits, and to develop an Academic Accommodation Plan (AAP) to include appropriate accommodations and services. Examples of reasonable accommodations and support services include: Note-taking assistance, audio recording lectures, extra time for tests, a quiet/distraction reduced setting to take a test, registration assistance, sign-language interpretation for students who are deaf, seating location, extra breaks, the use of assistive technology, materials in alternate formats, assessment, evaluation, advocacy, referral, and many more. The rapid expansion of new technologies has provided new ways to effectively accommodate postsecondary students. Many schools are considering the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) when making decisions about

instructional environments. This has led to an expansion of learning tools available to all students.

The accommodations a student has used growing up may be considered reasonable in the college environment, however, some accommodations that were acceptable in K-12 school districts, may not be considered reasonable to postsecondary institutions. A good starting point is for the counselor to ask the student which types of accommodations they have used successfully in the past. The college can support those accommodations if they are considered reasonable or make different recommendations that would support the student's needs. I often direct students toward accommodations that will lead them to a higher level of independence in the college district. If a student is using accommodations in high school or an ATP that are not considered reasonable accommodations at the postsecondary level, it may be helpful to begin to fade the unnecessary accommodations to better prepare the student. This can be a challenge for parents who have fought for additional accommodations, however, it

may benefit the student when they reach the postsecondary level and no longer have access to accommodations that are not considered reasonable. A few examples of this may be students taking tests home if they do not finish, curriculum modification that alter course integrity, and modified grades.

Students enrolled in credit instruction at a college must meet college requirements to enter and be successful with classes. College institutions will provide access and reasonable accommodations, but that does not guarantee success. There are options other than credit instruction, but families need time to research what is available prior to transition from high school. Making an informed decision regarding disclosing a disability that will affect education, employment and social lives is a personal decision. Please refer to the following two documents developed through the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy for information on disability disclosure:



- [Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities](#)
- [The 411 on Disability Disclosure](#)

## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE POSSIBILITIES

### Educating Adults

There are a variety of alternatives available when it comes to educating adults. Many people think in terms of a traditional college experience when they consider school options. The college experience may include: A credit vocational certificate or AA degree from a community college, a B.A. or B.S. degree from a four-year public or private university, and graduate programs at universities. Other examples of educational programming aimed at serving adult learners include adult education, non-credit community college programs, career and technical education (CTE), community education, apprenticeships, and regional occupational programs (ROP).

ROP are vocationally oriented and utilize a very “hands-on” approach to learning. They combine the classroom environment with work experience or training. The work experience may be paid or unpaid and can lead to successful placement in a paid job. An example of an ROP is the [North Orange County ROP](#). ROP offers programming for eligible youth (age 14-24) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Workability I. Some of the ROP programs are fee-based. Examples of ROP programs include Computers, Child Development, Health Sciences, Hospitality, and many more. I recommend going to your local ROP webpage for details of programs available in your area.



One good resource for information about apprenticeship programs is the [apprenticeship program information search](#) on the website for the State of California Department of Industrial Relations. Examples of apprenticeship programs include automotive, carpentry, cement mason, cosmetology, culinary, electrical, health services, machinist, meat cutters, plumbing, and more. Check out the Apprenticeship e-Newsletter.



There is a lot of program overlap between adult education which is offered through the K-12 school districts, and non-credit instruction that is offered in the community college system. Common areas of instruction include: Adult basic skills, high school diploma, GED preparation, English as a second language, citizenship, older adults, parenting, career and technical education, and programs for adults with disabilities. Many school districts in California offer courses at their K-12 school sites in the community, or at campuses identified as adult schools.



Non-credit programs can be included on a credit college campus (more common), or at a stand-alone non-credit institution that is part of the community college district (not as common). The North Orange County Community College District and San Diego Community College District are examples of community college districts that have stand alone, non-credit institutions. Many students with disabilities are also taking advantage of

fee-based Community Education classes that NOCE offers e.g. Conversational Spanish, Dance, Guitar and more.



Recent legislation established the California Adult Education Program (CAEP). The intent of the legislation was to develop regional consortia that could better address the needs of adult learners. Members of a consortium include a community college district (including all the college entities within the district), and the high school districts in the geographic area where the community college district is located. County Department of Education may be a member, and many organizations can be partners e.g. local business, Department of Rehabilitation, Regional Centers, and community centers. The consortia have been tasked with identifying the gaps in adult education services for the region and implementing programs that will meet the needs of adult learners in the consortium’s community. Many CAEP consortia have been utilizing this opportunity to develop new programs, including programs that benefit students with disabilities. In Orange County, you will find four CAEP consortia:

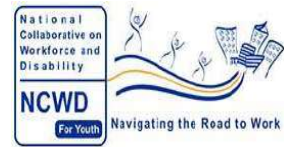


- [North Orange County Regional Consortium \(NOCRC\) for Adult Education](#)
- [Coast Adult Education Consortium](#)
- [Rancho Santiago Adult Education Consortium](#)
- [South Orange County Regional Consortium](#)

Each of these programs offer career related non-credit classes and certificates to promote successful employment and retention in career pathway jobs.

### **Other Postsecondary Education and Training Opportunities**

Completing classes, certificates and diplomas through postsecondary education institutions requires knowledge of services, supports and personal competencies needed to promote success. The following documents provide some guidance on these methods.



- [Personal Competencies for College and Career Success \(National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability\)](#)
- [Making My Way Through College: A guide for Students with Disabilities \(National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability\)](#)

### **North Orange Continuing Education**

I am going to share in some detail what my district, the [North Orange County Community College District \(NOCCCD\)](#), and [North Orange Continuing Education](#), does to support individuals with disabilities. The District and NOCE combine to provide a very comprehensive set of programs and services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Utilizing the NOCCCD as an example will provide



you with information about what to expect from college districts in general, and an idea of the diverse programs and possibilities that exist across our state. NOCE and their sister colleges, Cypress College and Fullerton College, provide reasonable accommodations and a variety of support services as described previously in the section, “Reasonable Accommodations and Support Services.”



Accommodations and support services are available to students with verified areas of disability for their classes and educational programming. This is the full extent of DSS services at many community colleges. Colleges and other postsecondary institutions



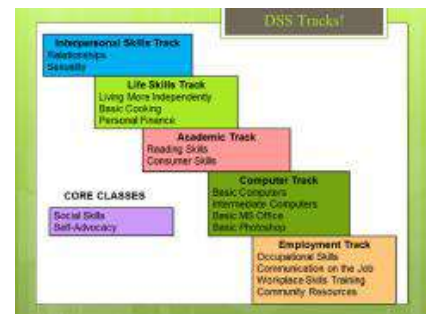
that provide reasonable accommodations and required support services are in compliance with the laws, and these supports may be all many students need to be successful in postsecondary education.

Many families believe their loved one needs much more than what college districts typically offer. Keep in mind, IDEA does not apply to colleges and postsecondary schools. The NOCCCD has established a non-credit institution within the district, NOCE, that provides the types of adult education programming previously described and more! The creation of NOCE has enabled the NOCCCD to serve adult learners more broadly, and to better serve individuals with disabilities. Many of the programs offered through NOCE and NOCCCD can be offered in any college district, but typically are not. I do not make this point to be negative toward other colleges. I want individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals to know that these programs exist, and that they can actively encourage their local communities to establish and build these programs.

Disability Support Services (DSS) at NOCE has built a program that offers many of the services and supports outlined previously plus additional service and educational options. NOCE DSS has partnered within the NOCCCD and community agencies to develop a comprehensive program to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The program has been constructed to progressively develop student independence leading to a more inclusive life. Students have greater opportunity to go to school, work, and live independently.



I have mentioned the role of the DSS Counselor previously. Our NOCE DSS Counselors complete intakes with students. They verify the student's disability, identify educational limitations, and develop an academic accommodation plan (AAP) for each student. Our NOCE DSS Counselors do much more. They provide pre-registration for students taking our DSS classes and meet with each student during an annual review to discuss progress toward their educational and vocational goals. Our counseling team is extremely knowledgeable regarding services on campus and resources available in the community. They help students transition to noncredit and credit programs and employment. Counselors are available daily to provide support for students who are struggling with the District's code of conduct, or who are having difficulty with communicating to staff and peers, or



who may be having a difficult day. The counseling team provides outreach to the community and are experts in providing transition training to students and families.

DSS offers Special Classes (DSS Classes) which are noncredit college classes funded completely through the North Orange County Community College. DSS Classes have been designed as an accommodation for students with intellectual disabilities (ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and similar cognitive disabilities. Typical class size is 24, however, classes that go into the community may be limited to 18 students, and some instructors like to enroll as many as 30. There is one teacher assigned to each class, and the classes are not supervised. Students come and go just like any other college student. Many classes include an instructional assistant, but this is not a requirement. NOCE has begun to offer these courses online through Distance Education. The curriculum focuses on the skills needed for employment, relationships, personal finance, technology, self-advocacy, and living more independently.



Curriculum development continues to focus on courses that target specific career interests, and classes that build the foundation for students to advance into inclusive noncredit and credit programs. NOCE offers many DSS classes on their three campuses, some community locations, and online. Any college district may offer DSS classes, but few do. It has been wonderful to see the continued development of these types of instructional programs at all of our sister community college districts in Orange County (Coast, South Orange, Rancho Santiago).

The student is the decision maker. Sometimes parents want their adult child to go to school, but the student does not want to attend. Our NOCE faculty counsel the student on the pros and cons of attending, offer encouragement, and ultimately support the individual's decision. Parents do not typically contact the teacher directly. We encourage parents to have their child (our student) call to request a meeting, and then the student can invite their family to the meeting. NOCE staff do not necessarily contact families when there are issues in classes, or on campus. We do not contact parents if a student does not want us to contact their parents. We do encourage our students to build strong, adult to adult relationships with their parents. We like to include families in many aspects of our program and in better serving our students, but our efforts go through the student (they are in the driver's seat). Promoting independence at school, work, and in the community is a huge part of our program. Students become more independent and increase their skills when they are put in a position of being responsible for themselves. We see tremendous growth and maturity in most of our students!

The DSS classes lay a great foundation to further integrate into inclusive classes, work, and living independently in the community. Inclusion is the intent of the DSS classes. Students use DSS classes to build a foundation of knowledge and skills that enables them to pursue more options on campus and in the community.

NOCE DSS has pursued additional collaborations with community partners to provide needed instruction and programming to students. Examples of community partners include the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), the State Council on Development Disabilities, the Regional Center of Orange County (RC), and the UCLA Tarjan Center. NOCE received a grant (Job Access Reverse Commute, JARC) from OCTA to provide bus mobility skills training to students. Students learn to utilize public transportation for school, work and getting around their community.



The Work Independence Self-Advocacy Education (WISE) program is a collaboration between Regional Center and NOCE. Regional center vendors the WISE program and pays a daily rate. NOCCCD provides additional fiscal support for the program. WISE includes the same subjects as the DSS



Classes; however, the subjects are weaved together in a weekly curriculum instead of individual classes. WISE students need closer instructional support. There is one instructional staff for every 4 students (1:4 ratio). It is a supervised program; however, students tend to be very independent e.g. they do not need

supervision to use the restroom or assistance with personal care needs. There is more direct communication between the WISE faculty and the families of students.

NOCE's DSS entered into two collaborative agreements with the Department of



Rehabilitation and built two vocationally oriented programs. Workability III (WAIll) is a program to help students with disabilities get jobs. Any student with a disability who is at least 18 years old and eligible for work may apply to WAIll. Students receive 1:1 support to prepare for, and obtain, employment. Individuals learn how to identify potential jobs, write resumes and cover letters,



complete job applications, and develop job leads. WAIII staff provide opportunities for students to practice job interviews, and help people understand what to expect from employers. The goal is to help students learn how to get a job, and to secure employment. The contract with DOR ends after the individual has been stable in their job for 90 days.

College to Career (C2C) is NOCE's other collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation. C2C is a program that provides additional supports to students with intellectual disabilities who are enrolled in inclusive noncredit and credit classes. These additional supports are not mandated services in the community college system. C2C serves 20 new students each year. Students must be at least 18 years old, eligible for work, and have an intellectual or similar cognitive disability. C2C students are typically eligible for services through Regional Center. Students develop



educational and vocational goals that lead to employment. Many students have earned noncredit vocational certificates (Career Technical Education, CTE) in subjects such as Early Childhood Education and Administrative Assistant. Other students have enrolled in credit classes at Fullerton College and Cypress College. Students need to keep in mind that the credit colleges do not modify their curriculum. There are many challenges for students served by C2C as they enroll into credit classes. Students who take full advantage of the services and supports offered through C2C will greatly increase their opportunities for success. Examples of supports that are available include: An instructional lab, some educational coaching, assistance with on-line course management tools (e.g. Canvas), help with course enrollment, support with communication, coordination with services and technology provided by DOR, assistance with

organizational skills, and help with coordinating accommodations. Students who wrap up their educational goals, then move into the employment phase of C2C which closely mirrors the services provided by WAIII.

There are many opportunities to partner with Regional Centers. They often fund for transportation and mobility skills training. They may pay for a vendor to provide attendant services on campus. An attendant can be considered a reasonable accommodation, but they need to follow the policies of the college district, and they cannot interfere with the integrity of the course. For example, an attendant cannot do the work for the student. Attendants are often used for students who need assistance with personal care due to physical limitations. There are some attendants who assist with the emotional or focus needs of students e.g. they might re-direct a student with ADHD to focus on what the instructor has asked them to do. They typically use non-verbal prompts. An attendant might assist a student who has emotional difficulties. For example, if a student is upset and headed toward an emotional outburst, an attendant

may be able to take a walk with them and help them to calm down. Each Educational Institution will have their own policy regarding the use of attendants. This can be something you and your loved one can discuss with the college DSS office.

Regional Center might vendor a community college program. The WISE program described above is an example of a Regional Center vendored program. NOCE has been vendored for another Regional Center – funded program, tailored day services (TDS). The NOCE program is called Independent Vocational and Educational Supports (IVES). TDS enables programs to provide a relatively small number of hours per week to assist individuals with vocational and educational goal attainment. Many of the services described in the C2C section could be available to an individual who is served by Regional Center under the TDS vendorship. Colleges and postsecondary schools can reach out to their local Regional Centers to collaborate on ideas they feel could serve their students better (students who are eligible for RC). Regional Centers must provide “Self-Determination” services. Self-determination is a process whereby Regional Center allocates money to an individual with a disability so that they can directly purchase the services and supports that they feel best meet their needs.



NOCE is a member of a California Adult Education Program (CAEP) consortium called the North Orange County Regional Consortium for Adult Education (NOCRC). This consortium includes the three NOCCCD entities (NOCE, Cypress College, Fullerton College), North Orange County Regional Occupational Program (ROP), the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), and five member high school districts (Anaheim Union High School District, Fullerton Joint Union High School District, Placentia Yorba Linda Unified School District, Garden Grove Unified School District, and Los Alamitos Unified School District). The consortium is actively involved in all program areas discussed previously under CAEP.



I would like to provide some examples of what the North Orange Consortium is doing for adults with disabilities. Prior to the legislation that established the AEP, the same college and high school entities partnered under the Postsecondary Education Transition Consortium (PSETC). Many of the PSETC members became members of the CAEP consortium in our region. PSETC had been meeting for years and had already identified holes in the service delivery system and ideas for

better programming. The DSS Work Group for NOCRC was able to quickly develop plans that could be funded through the CAEP.

NOCE has been able to partner with NOCRC to secure supplemental funding for some services. The biggest success has been our Academics, Relationships, Independence, Self-Advocacy, and Emotional Health (ARISE) program. It serves as an instructional support and wellness hub. ARISE was designed to provide additional supports to students



with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) but has expanded to support students with mental health needs, anxiety, and stress. The hub has proven beneficial to students from all NOCE programs. ARISE is a sensory-friendly space where students can decompress, seek guidance, and socialize with peers. The hub offers individual and group counseling, and small group instruction. Staff provide services and resources that support the educational, vocational and personal goals of students. The consortium has

supported research efforts to better identify needs related to mental health, transition, and classroom instructional supports.

### **Additional Postsecondary Education & Training Options in Orange County**

There are many PSE & Training options in Orange County including:

- Community Colleges
- University of California
- California State Universities
- Private Universities
- Online Programs
- America’s Job Centers/One Stop Centers
- Department of Rehabilitation
- Specialized Trade and Technical Schools

It is important to assist your son or daughter in exploring and identifying a postsecondary option(s) where they can go to continue their education. Learning is a concept that continues through life and includes building job related skills, independent living skills and other continuing educational interests.



Please see this website for information regarding Orange County Colleges and other Higher Education Opportunities: [OC Colleges and Higher Education](http://oc.gov.com).



## AVAILABLE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Families need to know about the wide range of services and resources available to adults with disabilities. It is important as transition planning efforts commence, that each individual's strengths, needs and interests be considered to guide the identification, exploration and access to a wide range of community resources and services to promote adult self-sufficiency. I will provide many examples here, but this list is not exhaustive.

### County Mental Health

Individuals with mental health disabilities are likely to qualify for County Mental Health. For example, the County of Orange, [Health Care Agency](#) provides Adult Mental Health Services. Examples of services include individual and group therapy, treatment for substance abuse, crisis intervention, in-patient treatment, residential services, and mental health professionals who may assist with assessment, medications, and monitoring. Many families have shared with me that their insurance and medical plans go a long way toward meeting their loved one's needs, but County Mental Health Services may be a good resource for individuals who do not have adequate insurance coverage.



### Department of Rehabilitation

The [California Department of Rehabilitation \(DOR\)](#) offers career related services to people who have disabilities. Services can include case management, career assessment, work training, job development and placement, assistive technology and training, some resources to help job development (e.g. transportation, clothes for interviews, etc.), and some resources for school (e.g. supplies, books, fees, etc.). The DOR Counselor will help your loved one develop vocational goals, and an individualized plan to meet those goals. DOR must consider your goals achievable. If you identify a long-term vocational goal, and DOR is unsure that it is achievable, they might ask you to redefine your goal. They may want you to break down your goal into a series of short-term goals that can lead to success.



DOR may provide some services directly such as case management, vocational assessment, and job development, however, they are likely to refer the person with a disability to vendored programs and services. A vendor is a program or an organization that has a contractual agreement with the Department of Rehabilitation. DOR may refer individuals to programs such as supported employment, Workability III, Workability IV and College to Career. These are programs that focus on helping individuals with job development and placement. Services often include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, self-advocacy, assistance with developing a resume, completing applications, developing job leads, practicing interviews, setting up interviews, securing employment, providing training, and on-going support. DOR may contract with vendors for other services and supports such as

assistive technology, vocational assessments, educational coaching (e.g. College to Career), work experience, and educational and vocational supplies.

## **Medi-Cal & Medicare**

Many adults with disabilities in California are eligible for medical insurance through governmental programs. Medi-Cal and Medicare are linked to SSI and SSDI. A person who is found eligible for SSI will be eligible to apply for, and receive, [Medi-Cal](#). An adult who receives SSDI can become eligible for [Medicare](#). Medi-Medi is a term used for individuals who receive both Medi-Cal and Medicare.

Some regions of California implement Medi-Cal through a managed care system. For example,

Orange County California has a managed care system called [Cal-Optima](#). Benefit recipients typically have a primary care physician and/or physicians’ network where they access their primary medical care and receive referrals for specialty medical services.



## **Regional Centers**

[Regional Centers \(RC\)](#) are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. They have offices throughout California to provide a local resource to help find and access the many services available to individuals and their families. Regional centers provide diagnosis and assessment of eligibility and help plan, access, coordinate and monitor the services and supports that are needed to support individuals who have developmental disabilities. Regional Centers coordinate programming such as residential, day, transportation, social, independent living, respite, medical, psychological, and early start services.



Regional Centers (RC) offer a unique opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities in California. RCs serve individuals with intellectual disability (ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), epilepsy, cerebral palsy (CP), and disabilities similar to ID that require a comparable level of services and supports. Generally, an individual who is eligible under one of these areas of disability will be eligible to receive services from birth (or onset of the disability as long it is prior to age 18) through the entire life span. Regional Center will coordinate Early Start services in California such as developmental monitoring, service coordination, global developmental programs, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. RC provides referrals to the local school districts at age 3 for both





children who do not receive ongoing services from RC, and those who have been made eligible for ongoing services at RC.

People often ask me, "What is my service coordinator's role?" Individuals who are eligible for RC based on an eligible area of disability, can receive coordination and services throughout their lives. The Regional Center system was built because families and legislators worked together to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families had a specific person in their lives who could coordinate services. Their job is to understand the needs, goals, and dreams of the individual they serve, and help them figure out how to access services and resources (coordinate!). An example of this coordination might be a service coordinator finding 3-4 vendored programs that assist with behavioral interventions. The service coordinator would then provide the individual and their family with the list of vendors and allow the family to meet with each vendor to choose the one that is right for their loved one. If the individual and their family decide that none of the vendors are a good fit, the service coordinator can provide additional vendors for the family to investigate.

Regional Centers do fund for some services, but the funding of services was not the primary focus of the Regional Centers at the beginning. I often tell families not to focus on "who" is funding, rather, expect that your service coordinator will understand your loved one and your family, and will help you figure out how to get services in place. It is their job to worry about the funding. Families can invite their service coordinators (SC) to school meetings (IEPs, ITPs) to help with understanding services offered through the school, provide advocacy, and be supportive of the family. The SC may be able to help coordinate services outside the school. For example, some children take longer to become independent when using the restroom and RC may be able to coordinate toilet training. The student may be experiencing behavioral issues at school and at home, and the RC may be able to coordinate in-home behavior support that reinforces the efforts of the school. A SC might be able to help a child who does not have medical insurance obtain Medi-Cal, or a family who needs more support in the home to get Respite or In-Home Support Services (IHSS). The SC will be critical as your loved one transitions to adult services (both "generic" resources and Regional Center funded Services).

Families can access resources through the Regional Center more easily when they have a good understanding of the eligibility process. RC coordinates Early Start services to children birth to three years of age. Many children receive Early Start services (see above for examples of services), and then are not made eligible for on-going Regional Center services at age 3. The children are typically referred to the K-12 school districts at age three regardless of their eligibility for on-going services through the Regional Center. A child may be considered for Early Start Services if they are at risk for a developmental disability, or if they are showing significant delays in their developmental milestones.

Eligibility for on-going RC services at the age of three is based on three areas of criteria. I shared the first criteria earlier. The individual must have developmental disability as defined by the Lanterman Act. Eligible areas of disability include intellectual disability

(ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), epilepsy, cerebral Palsy (CP), and disabilities similar to ID that require a comparable level of services and supports. The disability must exist prior to the age of 18. This is the second criteria. The last criteria is that the disability must be “substantial”. The law describes seven areas of major life activity, and the individual must have “significant functional limitations” in at least three of the seven areas. The seven areas include self-care, receptive and expressive language (communication), learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

What an individual or parent says when they contact a Regional Center may affect whether or not they receive an intake regardless of the person’s actual disability and need. If a family tells the Regional Center that their loved one has a learning disability, speech and language disability, physical disability, or any other disability that is not one of the five areas cited in the law, then RC is not likely to provide an intake meeting. A family needs to say, “My child has an intellectual disability and he has difficulty with learning.” Or “My loved one has ASD and she has difficulty with communication (speech and language).” Call Regional Center and say, “I would like an intake.” Or, “I would like an intake for my child.” Be specific. You are not calling for information, you are calling to be considered for eligibility. You will need to be able to provide RC with school and medical records that support eligibility.

You have not been through an intake if you do not receive an eligibility confirmation or denial in writing. Many families tell me that they have been denied services from RC, but they have never received anything in writing. Intake service coordinators will provide you with an application and your fair hearing rights in writing if you are denied services. They will even offer to assist you with filling out the fair hearing paperwork if you would like them to do so.

Transition planning information is available on the [RCOC website](#).

### **Social Security Administration**

Your adult child may be eligible for benefits through the [Social Security Administration](#) (SSA). I recommend reviewing the Social Security Administration website, and their Red Book, [“2020 Red Book”](#).



I will provide a brief overview here. There are some general rules and situations that this section will summarize, but there are many different rules and situations that may require an individual and their family to examine more closely their specific circumstances. Many individuals with disabilities in California are eligible for a monthly cash benefit that is administered through the Social Security Agency. A person with a disability might be eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance Program (SSDI) which is a cash resource based on their parents’ contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund. Many people with disabilities in California are eligible for a monthly cash benefit

called Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI). A “concurrent” benefit indicates that a person is eligible for both programs.

The SSA’s website has many guides and publications that you might find interesting such as: “A Guide for Representative Payees,” and, “What You Need to Know When You Get Social Security Disability Benefits.”

## VENDORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

**Benefits Planning and Management.** Many families have shared with me that they do not want their loved ones to work because it will adversely affect their benefits (e.g. SSI, Medi-Cal, etc.). This is a serious consideration, but often misunderstood. Wages often do impact benefits. A general rule is that an individual will lose one dollar of SSI for every two dollars they earn. Most people who work part-time will have significantly more money per month. This can be a great situation. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has special rules that make it possible for people with disabilities receiving social security or supplemental security income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules "work incentives." There rules may enable a person to maintain their Medi-Cal if they earned enough to have their SSI reduced to zero. The Social Security Administration website provides more information on all of the [Work Incentives](#).



My view is that work is important, and I encourage people to find jobs they love. Supported employment programs will help individuals understand how to report wages to Social Security. Each person’s situation can be different. I recommend that families review the Social Security website, the current SSA Red Book and other brochures, and consult as needed with professionals who specialize in helping people with disabilities understand their benefits. The [Red Book](#) serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of the social security disability insurance (SSDI) and the supplemental security income (SSI) programs for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities.



You can get information about Social Security’s employment support provisions by calling toll free at 1-800-772-1213, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. You may obtain information at any of the Social Security field offices. Find your local office by going to the [Social Security office locator](#) on their website. Enter your postal ZIP code to get the address, telephone number, and directions to your local office.

Social Security Administration (SSA) work incentives help beneficiaries enter, re-enter, or continue in employment by protecting their eligibility for cash payments and/or health

care coverage until they achieve self-supporting employment. The work incentive rules are complex and may be confusing for beneficiaries. Work Incentives include:

- Impairment Related Work Expenses
- Individual Development Account
- Plan to Achieve Self Support
- Student Earned Income Exclusion
- Continued Medicaid (Medi-Cal) Eligibility for People Who Work (Section 1619b)
- Special SSI Rule for Blind People Who Work

The goal of the SSA work incentives planning and assistance (WIPA) program is to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to receive accurate information and use that information to make a successful transition to work. Each WIPA project has community work incentives coordinators (CWIC) who will:

- Work with you to help you understand your benefits
- Teach you when, how, and what to report to Social Security and other providers
- Provide in-depth, individualized counseling about your benefits and the effect of work on those benefits
- Provide ongoing support and information as you transition to work

Certified benefits planners are available to assist individuals with disabilities who are working or planning to work through the following agencies:

- Project Independence Work Incentive Planning & Assistance Program (WIPA) Program
- Regional Center of Orange County Benefits Specialist
- Department of Rehabilitation Work Incentive Planners (WIPS)
- Disability Rights California



For additional information on benefits planning and management, including a benefits calculator, go to the following [Disability Benefits 101 Website](#).



The federal Achieving a Better Life Experience (“ABLE”) Act of 2014 was signed into law in 2014. ABLE Accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain means-tested public benefits programs, like Medicaid and SSI. Individual account holders can save up to \$100,000 that is not counted in determining eligibility for means tested federal or state benefit programs. Many states offer ABLE Accounts including California. A [CalABLE account](#) is an investment and savings account available to eligible individuals with disabilities in California. Earnings in your ABLE Account are not subject to federal or California state income tax, so long as you spend them on “Qualified Disability Expenses.”



The [ABLE National Resource Center](#) (ABLE NRC) is a comprehensive source of information regarding federal and state ABLE programs and activities, including guidance on tax-advantaged ABLE savings accounts. For more information please see the following documents:

- [ABLE 2 Page Info Sheet](#)
- [ABLE Fact Sheet & Road Map](#)
- [CalABLE Fact Sheet](#)

Many of the large social service type agencies such as County Social Services, Department of Rehabilitation, and Regional Centers will provide services to individuals with disabilities through contracted service providers or agencies. These service providers are sometimes called vendors, and they are paid to provide services to individuals with disabilities via their “vendorship”. A vendorship provides a contractual relationship whereby the social services agency pays for services, provides referrals, and often has a role in quality assurance and accountability.



I will provide examples below of services that your loved one might be eligible to receive. This is not an exhaustive list of services. It is meant to give families a general idea of what is out there. Individuals with developmental disabilities in California may have access to a wider range of services because of the Lanterman Act which established the Regional Center system. Most of the services identified below are available for persons with developmental disabilities. I will point out which services are likely to include other areas of disability.



**Living Options.** Moving out of your parents’ home into your own place is a common rite of passage in our country. This is also a goal of many individuals with disabilities. The idea of a loved one with a disability living on their own can be intimidating for families, however, there are many support options for individuals with disabilities to live independently.

Individuals who want to live in their own apartments may be eligible for independent living services (ILS) or supported living services (SLS). The person controls their own home. Common services include assistance with applying for “section 8” housing (see below), identifying a roommate, locating an affordable apartment, completing lease agreements, coordinating medical care and appointments, and managing roommate relationships. ILS agencies provide instruction in mobility, banking, budgeting, bill paying, cleaning, cooking, and shopping. People who receive ILS services may receive as little as 1-2 hours per month, but a common range of hours is 20 to 30 hours per month.

Generally, individuals who need more support than this will receive SLS. Resources for supported living are often negotiated into an individualized budget between a Regional

Center and a SLS agency based on the direction and needs of the person who receives the services. SLS can be as much as 24 hours per day, and it is not uncommon for someone to receive two to four hours per day of services. SLS is intended to serve people who require a higher level of care and/or supervision. Anyone receiving RC services is eligible for ILS and SLS. The more intensive a person's needs, the more complicated it is to formulate a budget and services support system.



Many families have shared with me that they do not believe their adult children with developmental disabilities will ever have the capacity for living independently. I have shared previously about my bias toward supporting individuals in living as independent a life as possible. All adults who are served by Regional Centers are eligible for ILS/SLS services. Most of the individuals that I have met who have skills in the mild range of ID or ASD have the capacity to live independently.



The combination of a solid family support system and a strong service system are ideal for someone living independently. Many families are disappointed when their loved one moves into their own apartment and the ILS staff does not show up for a training session, or there is a missed bill payment. Families are not perfect, and neither are service agencies. If we expect perfection, we will continually be disappointed. However, having two systems in place to support the individual is awesome. I have seen many examples where an ILS agency "dropped the ball." For example, maybe they failed to help a person pay the monthly rent. The individual with the disability called their parents and received the help they needed to pay the bill. I have seen family members forget that they needed to take

their loved one to the doctor and called ILS staff at the last minute and the ILS staff were happy to take the person to the doctor. Having two systems in place really does support the individual better.

People in California who have developmental disabilities are eligible for ILS and SLS services. Individuals with other disabilities may find some assistance with living more independently through County Mental Health, Department of Rehabilitation, and private foundations. One of the best ways to find resources for other people who have disabilities would be to network with other families and join family support groups. For example, a young adult who has Schizophrenia might go to a mental health website (e.g. NAMI,



[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)) or a support group to find out what independent living type services other people are receiving.

Housing and rent are very expensive in California, and often make it very difficult for a person with a disability to move into their own apartment. There are a number of ways to make it more affordable. Many people with disabilities in California are eligible for Section 8 housing vouchers. People often refer to Section 8 housing as “HUD”. Section 8 rental assistance is administered through agencies called housing authorities. Each housing authority has a geographic coverage area such as a city, county, or unincorporated area. The housing authorities usually have waiting lists to obtain a voucher that can be used



for any rental unit that accepts the value of the voucher (and meets additional Section 8 requirements). There are some apartment complexes that are completely dedicated to section 8 housing. Waiting lists can last a long time such as seven to eight years, and the waiting lists are not always open i.e. people have to monitor the housing authority for an announcement that the waiting list is open. There is usually a limited amount of time that an individual has to utilize their voucher once it is received.

There are other things that an individual can do to help with affordable housing. Living with one or more roommates will usually help bring the monthly cost of rent down. Families have purchased houses or apartments for their loved ones to have for the rest of their life (estate planning and special needs trusts should be considered).

Some agencies have worked with cities, counties, and private companies to bring affordable housing to individuals who cannot afford to pay a high level of rent. Some agencies who serve people who are elderly or who have a disability have built new buildings or renovated old structures to provide affordable housing units. Some RCs have entered partnerships for the same purpose.

Having a range of options in any service area is important. Moving out of your parent’s home and choosing another adult living arrangement is a very personal decision. What is right for one person may not be right for another. My focus has been on independent living, and it is my preferred option for adults with disabilities. Nobody should feel that moving into a residential facility is the only option for a person who has a disability. The general consensus in the field is that facilities in the community have played a key role leading to the movement of individuals from large facilities and State developmental centers to living in the community. A few large facilities still exist but are not likely to be around much longer. Many have been closed and there are long-term plans to close all

of them. Most people who have developmental disabilities can be served well living in their own community. Small facilities will likely continue to be an option for a long time, but individuals living in their own homes, with the ability to control their own environment, is generally seen as the future for individuals with ID, ASD, and similar disabilities.

There are licensed facilities such as community care facilities (CCF, Community Care Licensing), and intermediate care facilities (ICF, Health Care Licensing). These are homes that provide staffing 24 hours per day. Facilities are licensed at different levels. The staffing ratio (number of staff to individuals served) and additional services provided vary dependent on the level and type of facility. A person choosing this option would be referred to a number of facilities based on a combination of what they want and what they need. Licensing agencies and regional centers monitor the services provided in these facilities. The quality of facilities ranges widely. Some homes are beautiful and run by service providers who really know how to support people who have disabilities. Anyone who is considering this option should really do their homework. They should get plenty of referrals, understand the benefits and limits of living in a facility, talk with other families, and tour many homes before making a decision. Regional Centers make referrals to homes that serve individuals with developmental disabilities. County mental health programs, hospitals, and medical professionals often serve as the referral source for individuals who have mental health disabilities.



There are living arrangements that can operate as a bridge to independent living, or as an independent living situation in their own right. Sometimes a facility is a good steppingstone to independent living. Homes that offer room and board (R&B) may provide enough support for someone with a disability to live independently. These



homes typically provide a room for the person to live, and one meal a day. The owner of the home may serve as a supportive contact for the person with a disability. They may not provide a lot of service to the individual, but typically know what is going on the person's life and is often available to the person with the disability in a more informal capacity. The R&B is not licensed, and people often confuse it with board and care (B&C) facilities. This is a term associated with some of the licensed facilities

discussed previously. Renting a room may be an independent living option for some



people. Often renting a room is less expensive than renting an apartment. There are times where a RC might offer some independent living services to individuals who are renting a room or living in an R&B.

Adult family home agencies (AFHA/family home providers) represent another living option that may be appropriate for people with developmental disabilities. This residential model acknowledges that we have an aging population, and that many people with developmental disabilities are becoming older and still living with their elderly parents. Many people who have lived with their families their whole lives do not want to live in a residential facility and may not be interested (or have developed the skills) to live in their own apartments. Their choice may be to continue living in a family setting with another family who has decided to serve one or two adults who have disabilities. The individual moves into that family's home, and the family home provider gets reimbursed from the RC based on the needs of the individual(s) they serve. There is no age limit for this adult living option i.e. they can serve young adults, older adults, and people in their middle adult years.

There are other types of residential options, and many of these other supports are short-term and intended to meet unique needs. Individuals with mental health disabilities sometimes suffer an acute mental health crisis that may lead to placement in a psychiatric hospital or facility. Residential rehabilitation centers focus on helping individuals with medical disabilities heal and regain their independence, and chemical dependency rehabilitation centers help individuals as they begin their recovery from chemical dependency. Homes such as half-way houses and sober living facilities are intended to help people gradually re-introduce themselves to the community following a mental health crisis or to help recover from chemical dependency.

**Work Options.** Work is also a rite of passage! Most of the people who have disabilities that I know are quite capable of working. Attitudes and lack of information are often



much bigger barriers to employment than an individual's actual limitations. Some employers make poor assumptions when they think about people who have disabilities. They may believe that a person is not capable of learning a job, or that they have poor work habits, or that they have to be continuously supervised. The fact is that the great majority of individuals with disabilities have outstanding work habits, do not need supervision, and can learn a wide range of jobs. It is important that family members and professionals who support people with disabilities be confident about the individual's capacity for employment because they will need our support to change the views of others.

People with disabilities in California are eligible for services through the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). This state level agency has regional offices,

and their focus is to help individuals find work, and extend their education to better develop their careers. DOR provides some services directly and provide funding and referrals to other agencies to provide services. Examples of services, supports, and resources offered through DOR and their vendors include vocational case management, job development, work experience, training, assistive technology, vocational assessment, evaluation of technology needs, educational fees, school supplies, transportation, and clothes for job interviews.



Services through DOR are generally available to most individuals with disabilities in California. The local regional DOR office will complete an intake and determine eligibility. Eligibility for DOR is much broader than eligibility for Regional Center (i.e. most people with a verified disability are likely to be eligible), however, the focus of the agency is narrower than RCs (i.e. employment and educational supports that lead to employment). Your DOR counselor will want to know your vocational goals. They might not open your case if you do not have a goal that leads to employment. They might play a role in supporting a person’s educational goals as long as the educational goals are related to the vocational goals. DOR must believe that a person’s vocational and educational goals are achievable (see the section above, “Department of Rehabilitation” for more details).



DOR and RCs work with supported employment programs (SEP). Many people with developmental disabilities are served by SEPs, and some supported employment programs are vendored with DOR to provide services to people who have disabilities but are not served by the regional centers. College to Career (C2C) and Workability III & IV (WAIII, WAIV) have some similarities to supported employment programs, and were discussed previously in the North Orange Continuing Education section).

Supported employment programs will work with individuals to identify work goals, and then they will help them learn how to prepare for work. They will teach a person how to fill out job applications (on-line, paper), put together resumes, and write cover letters. The SEP will work on job development. They will contact potential employers, and they will help the individual learn how to network and contact employers directly. Practicing job interviews is a common activity. Understanding employers’ expectations and what to anticipate during their first week of work is often reviewed. SEPs will help to secure the job interviews, and then they will often provide job coaching to help train the person how to do their job. There may be a lot of 1:1 job coaching the first week or two of a job, and then the



job coaching will be reduced. Some people do not need on-going job coaching. Often, individuals just need a small number of hours per month of job coaching to help them maintain employment. DOR pays for all the pre-employment services, and they continue to fund until the person has been in their job for 90 days. DOR will stop funding if the job has been stable for 90 days. Regional center will often pay for the on-going supports after the 90-day closure of the DOR case.

There are a variety of day programs to meet the needs of individuals who may not be ready to start work in an individual employment setting. There are community-based adult services (CBAS) for adults who require ongoing assistance with specialized health care needs, and partial-day hospitalization programs for people who have mental health disabilities. Behavior management day programs provide training and support to people who have difficulty with inclusion in other programs due to behavioral obstacles. Many community-based day programs focus on pre-vocational and community skills. These programs are very diverse. Some have a strong focus on providing training so that a person can elevate their skills to the point where they can get a job. Other programs work with individuals with more significant limitations, and who may need or want a program to help them stay active. These programs can be site-based, community-based, or partial site-based.



The Orange County Department of Education produces an annual [Transition Planning Resource Directory](#). The purpose of this directory is to acquaint students and their families with post-school training and employment support options.

The first section of the directory includes programs funded by the Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC), State Department of Education, and CalOptima. These services are vended as activity programs, adult development programs, and behavior management programs. Integrated work and volunteer placement are a component in a number of these programs. The State Department of Education offers classes through adult education and the community college districts provide noncredit courses. Cal-Optima and Regional Center of Orange County fund community-based adult services (CBAS) for adults who require ongoing assistance with specialized health care needs. The second section of the directory includes supported employment programs (as described previously).



Individual agencies listed in this directory are not affiliated with the Orange County Department of Education. Program descriptions were developed by each agency and reflect the philosophy of that agency. Inclusion of program descriptions in this directory does not indicate an endorsement of individual agencies. It is suggested that those

seeking services become familiar with program options in order to provide input in the referral process, and to make an informed choice in the placement decision.

**Transportation.** Transportation is another area you and your adult child will need to make decisions about. Learning to ride the city bus is one of the best ways to increase one’s independence when they do not have a driver’s license. There are a number of resources that may be available to teach your loved one how to ride the city bus. Many adult transition programs (ATPs) provide bus mobility skills instruction. There may be collaborations with local transportation agencies (see Postsecondary and College below for an example). Regional centers often collaborate with supported employment programs and independent living skills agencies to provide bus mobility skills training.

Families often worry that their loved one who has a disability will not be safe riding public transportation, or that they will be unable to learn how to ride the city bus. Instructors often use a strategy of progressive steps to teach people how to ride the



bus. They might begin by meeting the person at their home and walking with them to the bus stop. They watch for the correct bus, get on together, pay the fare (cash or bus pass) together, and find a seat together. The mobility teacher will help the individual to identify intersections, street signs, and landmarks so that they start to learn the route. Most buses are equipped with audio and

electronic signs that indicate each upcoming street and bus stop. New riders learn how to pull the alarm cable or push buttons to communicate to the driver that they need to exit the bus. Instructor and student exit the bus together, walk to their destination, and then return home utilizing the same type of instruction.

A next step that instructors often use is to follow their mobility student to the bus stop, and then observe them as they pay their fare, find a seat, track their progress and complete their roundtrip ride. It is not uncommon for an instructor to let their student “get lost”. If the student knows the route, but is not paying attention, the instructor might wait to see how long it takes the person to realize they missed their stop and that they are lost. The instructor watches to see how the student reacts. Do they ask the bus driver for help? Do they look at the bus guidebook? Do they pull up the route on their mobile phone app? These experiences often help students develop a greater capacity to stay aware of where they are and the things going on around them. Some mobility teachers will test their student’s independence when they believe the student understands the route by following the student in a car as they walk to the bus stop, get on the bus, and exit at their location. The student typically is able to stay in contact with the instructor via mobile phone.

Each student learns at their own pace. Some students will learn a trip the first time they go out. Other individuals will receive training a couple of times a week for several months. The instructor typically helps a student learn to use route planning tools such as bus route books, transportation agency web-based planning guides, and mobile apps such as Google Maps.

Teaching people with disabilities how to stay safe is a huge priority and is part of all aspects of the training. There is no perfect safety plan.

Riding the city bus is a very independent activity. Students are encouraged to sit close to the bus driver, and to communicate with the driver if someone is bothering them. They are taught to keep personal property close to their body e.g.

backpacks on their laps, and to pay attention to people and activities that go on around them. Utilizing the cell phone is a good safety tool. Students are taught to call 911 in an emergency, and instructors often review key contacts they can call if they are lost or are experiencing a problem in the community. Instructors may offer other tips e.g. do not share personal information with strangers, do not let people use your phone, and do not give people money. They might share that if a person is feeling unsafe in the community, they can go into a business such as a bank, grocery store, or restaurant and ask for a manager.



There may be options for helping with the costs of transportation. Transportation agencies tend to offer reduced fares for individuals with disabilities. This usually requires an application to be completed by a doctor, educational program, or social services agency who can verify the disability. Agencies such as County Social Services, Department of Rehabilitation, and Regional Center may pay for bus passes.

There are “curb to curb” transportation services such as taxi, dial-a-ride, ACCESS, and private transportation companies. Curb to curb services provide another transportation option that enables individuals with disabilities to be less dependent on their families for transportation.

The transportation company picks up at the person’s home (or other pick up spot) and drops them off at their destination. There are circumstances where



agencies will pay for curb to curb services. Sometimes agencies will not pay for curb-to-curb services for individuals who are capable of riding the city bus because the bus is a less expensive option. There are many people who qualify for and utilize both city bus and curb-to-curb type services.



Some families prefer to provide transportation for their adult children with disabilities. Sometimes this is out of necessity because public transportation is not close enough to be accessible. Other times the destination is too far and would require the person being on a bus for an unreasonable amount of time. Some individuals and their families are just not comfortable with public transportation. Decisions about transportation, like so many other areas of service, come down to needs, goals, and personal preferences.

I tend to promote learning to ride the city bus if it is possible. People with disabilities have so many more options if they can get anywhere they need or want to go without depending on other people. Independence with transportation reinforces opportunities for work and to live in one’s own apartment. Many individuals with disabilities rarely see friends outside of school, but if they know how to ride the bus, they can go meet their friends anywhere!

Keep in mind there are other public and private transportation options your loved one can learn. The more they know, the easier it will be for them to access education, employment, work training, independent living and social opportunities.

**Other Services and Resources.** There are many resources and services available in the community. I have highlighted some of the major service agencies and resources that will benefit many of you. A book that attempted to identify every resource available, if that were possible, would be outdated as soon as it was published. My goal is to help families get a good, general understanding of the types of services available, and some tools to help them navigate service systems more successfully. There are service agencies that focus on people with visual impairments like the [Braille Institute](#). Resources are available to help individuals with assistive technology needs like [Goodwill Assistive Technology Exchange Center](#) (ATEC). Some organizations, like [Autism Speaks](#), focus on one area of disability such as ASD. If you are looking for resources that have not been identified in this book, I would recommend starting with an internet search and identifying websites and support groups that serve people who have similar needs to your family and your loved one.

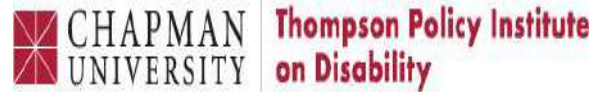


The [State Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) (SCDD) has been established by state and federal law as an independent state agency to ensure that people with

developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need. Individuals with disabilities know best what supports and services they need to live independently and to actively participate in their communities. Through advocacy, capacity building and systemic change, SCDD works to achieve a person-centered and family-based system of individualized services, supports, and other assistance.



The [Chapman University Thompson Policy Institute](#) Transition Initiative Steering Committee has developed a website to provide transition planning and employment related information and resources to stakeholders including individuals with disabilities, families, service providers, educators, and business partners. The goal is to ensure that stakeholders have access to up-to-date and quality articles, training information, tools, documents and resource contacts. The mission is to promote and support successful transition to employment, independent living, and quality of life for individuals with disabilities. Topic on the website include:



- Individuals with Disabilities
- COVID 19-Facts & Health Information
- Community Resources
- Webinars
- Virtual Curriculum Resources
- Benefits Planning and Management
- Complex Support Needs
- Business Partners
- Transition Planning
- Employment Preparation and Competitive Integrated Employment

A Transition Training Calendar is available on the front page of the website and includes transition and work-force development related training opportunities for all stakeholders.

[The Orange County Local Partnership Agreement \(OCLPA\)](#) is a collaboration to enhance partnerships that promote preparation for and achievement of competitive integrated employment (CIE) for youth and adults with disabilities and related “at risk” populations including individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). The OCLPA team has developed a best practice person centered/person driven planning concept to support an individual’s pathway to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). Monthly OCLPA meetings are held and the first task of the group was to develop the, “Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint.” The agreement includes activities the partners agree to implement to support CIE.



Several California State agencies are responsible for the statewide policy development related to CIE and the LPA These agencies include Health and Human Services, the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the

Department of Education. Local partners include Regional Center of Orange County, local Department of Rehabilitation offices, County Department of Education, Chapman University's Thompson Policy Institute, San Diego State University's Interwork Institute, secondary and postsecondary institutions, regional consortiums, CAEP consortiums, workforce development programs, business partners, local employers, service agencies, families and individuals with disabilities.



## **Referrals to Programs**

Many professionals who work for schools, programs and service agencies are responsible for making referrals to a wide range of service programs. Doctors, therapists, psychiatrists, nurses, and other medical professionals may be responsible for providing referrals to programs. Some professionals will simply give you and your loved one a contact name and phone number for a program. Some counties in California have a referral program called 211. Anyone can use their phone to call 211, and the 211 call center staff will help the caller identify the types of resources they are looking for: [211](#).



Large service agencies such as County Social Services, Department of Rehabilitation and Regional Centers usually have a more formal process. Ideally, receiving 3 or more referrals to programs is best. The agency, with your consent, will often send programs a packet of referral information about your loved one. They will ask the agency to contact your family after they have had the opportunity to review the packet. Programs typically schedule a time to meet prospective clients.

Service agencies will interview your adult child, and this is the perfect time to interview them! It is important that your adult child identifies programs that they like, and that they believe can support their goals! Do not be afraid to ask programs specific questions that will help you to decide if they are the best program for your loved one. A person who wants a job in a movie theatre might ask a supported



employment program how many people that have helped to gain employment in movie theatres. If a person wants to live in a specific city, they might ask the independent living skills agency how many people they serve in that city. Your adult child will select the program that they want to work with, and if that program is in agreement, then the program will make arrangements for a start date. There are times where the referring agency must approve the placement and put a contract in place. This is typically the case with programs funded by DOR and RCs.



## **When should I apply for services in the community?**

Many people ask me, “When is the right time to apply for services?” Transitions at any point in a person’s life can be very difficult, and for many people with a disability, the transition to their adult life and services can be overwhelming. I find this particularly true if they have waited until they have graduated or are close to graduating. The various service agencies have different entrance requirements (including the areas of disability served), timelines to establish eligibility, required documentation, and appeals processes. Trying to work with too many at one time is very time consuming and can make things very confusing.

I might be going too far by saying, “Make transition a lifestyle,” however, it is important to always keep transition and the resource needs of your loved one in mind. It is not too early in elementary school for families to begin learning about adult services, and you might discover some beneficial services for your school-age child that you did not realize were available. Families who take a little time every year to become better



informed about resources that are available across the life span are less likely to be overwhelmed when a key transition starts. Visiting some programs, talking with service providers, and asking good questions during annual IEP and IPP meetings will help families gradually gain good information, and help them to plan better for a smoother transition.

Applying for services is based on the individualized needs of your child. Each person’s situation may differ. Someone who is likely to be eligible for services through a regional center are probably best served applying for, or maintaining, their RC

eligibility as a child. A person who is eligible for regional center is typically eligible their whole life, and if they maintain their eligibility throughout their childhood, it is one less major service agency they will need to apply for during their adult transition. Applying for SSI and Medi-Cal may be appropriate for children with families who meet the low-income eligibility guidelines through the Social Security Administration (SSA). As a person with an eligible disability turns 18, the income eligibility requirements change from the family to the individual. The decision to apply is often a high priority to individuals who need a monthly income and medical insurance. People often apply for DOR services when they turn 18 years old and they are ready for employment. DOR has recently expanded their service to include “student services” for individuals as young as age 16.



I recommend that families do whatever they can to obtain information throughout their child’s school-age years, and to avoid having to apply to multiple service agencies at the same time.

## MEETINGS

### **Individualized Planning**

The concept of individualized planning team meetings has become a hallmark in the field of serving people who have disabilities. Most individuals and their families are familiar with these meetings. Examples of plans developed through various service agencies, include:

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP; K-12)
- Individualized Transition Plan (ITP; K-12)
- Interdisciplinary Team Plan (ID Team; generic term)
- 504 Plans (K-12; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act applies to postsecondary)
- Individualized Program Plan (IPP; Regional Center)
- Planning Team Meeting (PTM; Regional Center)
- Individual Plan for Employment (IPE; Department of Rehabilitation)
- Person-Centered/Person-Driven Plan (PCP/PDP; All agencies)
- Individualized Services Plan (ISP, Service Providers)
- Academic Accommodation Plan (AAP; California Community Colleges)

Individualized planning meetings have many things in common. They focus on the individual person. It may be helpful to know and understand services and supports that other people with disabilities are receiving, but each person is different, and their plans depend on their own, unique needs and goals. Generally, individualized planning meetings of all kinds now are centered on the person. The job of a planning team, or interdisciplinary team, is to focus on the person's self-determined goals (Short-, mid-, long-term), identify barriers, determine necessary supports, and develop a plan to meet the person's needs.

Individualized planning meetings may vary in many ways. IEPs focus on K-12 educational goals. The Regional Center IPP focuses on all aspects of a person's life. The Department of Rehabilitation's Individualized Plan for Employment focus on vocational goals, and postsecondary educational goals that support vocational goals. Some plans are long and include a lot of description and social history. Others may get as simple as a one-page checklist.

### **Hearings**

Most agencies and organizations have hearing processes so that individuals may appeal decisions made locally. Some are very formal and outlined in law, while others are less formal and dictated by local policy. Hearing processes vary quite a bit, but some common examples include local meetings, administrative hearings, and mediations. A local meeting may look a lot like an individualized planning meeting. The individual, their family, and anyone they would like to invite would meet with representatives from the organization for which they have a dispute. Typically, the agency would assign a person, often an officer of the organization, to facilitate the

meeting and make a decision on behalf of the organization. Typically, this decision can be appealed to an administrative hearing. The administrative hearing is more formal and is often facilitated by an administrative law judge who would have authority to render a decision independent of the organization. A mediation would be moderated by a person who would not be a decision maker, however, if they are able to help the two sides come to an agreement for a plan to move forward, the agreement becomes binding.

There are many variations on the hearings identified above. Each organization is responsible for informing the individuals with the disability (and their families) about the hearing processes. In most cases, the organization must offer assistance with filing the hearing or appeal.

Many families have shared with me that they feel the hearing process, and sometimes the individualized planning process, is adversarial. I have definitely seen my share of adversarial meetings; however, this is never the intent of planning meetings or hearings. We live in a world of limited resources, and there are organizations that have specified roles and responsibilities. There will be disagreements about the best plans for an individual. Disagreements do not have to devolve into adversarial relationships.

### **Working with Agencies**

My best recommendations for working with agencies is to be friendly, professional, and assertive. You are an equal professional at the table, and you are the expert regarding your loved one!

Many families have expressed frustration and anger with professionals who work for large organizations such as schools and social services agencies: "The agency always says no." "I can't get the case manager to call me back." "I only see them one time per year." "Nobody has ever explained to me what the agency does. All I know is that they meet with me one time per year." "I have to file for a fair hearing every time I need something from them." "They meet with me to complete their required paperwork, and then I do not hear from them again for a year."

As a person with a disability, or a family member, you want agencies to be responsive to you. Most of us have become angry or frustrated with a school or an agency at one time or another. This may have resulted in raised voices, abruptly hanging up a phone, threats, or vows never to work with that agency again! My advice is to keep the conversation moving, and to act in ways that are more likely to have positive outcomes. Thus, be friendly! Is the person on the other end of the phone call more likely to want to answer that call if you are friendly or if you have an angry tone? Friendly does not mean "sugary sweet" or a friendliness that does not seem genuine. We can disagree with others and still be friendly. A kind tone does not become a barrier to conversation, whereas an angry tone will often shut the other person down.

Parents need to be confident in their professionalism. Nobody knows your loved one better than you, and no-one has spent more time with them. Others may have a

different relationship with your child, and they may know them in ways that you do not. Your knowledge and experiences with your loved one are critical for your child, and for those working with your child. You have observations that professionals will benefit from as they work with your child, and as they build relationships with people other than your child. The days where the parent sits at the table and just listens to the professionals are long gone. Be confident in your observations and your recommendations.

Assertiveness is a key tool toward advancing the plans, goals and service needs of your child. Aggressive, passive aggressive, and passive styles make it difficult to have a conversation. An assertive style, paired with a friendly professionalism, helps keep everyone focused and accountable. Honestly, it is hard to say “no” to a person who is friendly, professional and assertive. This approach is more likely to result in people wanting to work with you (and not disappoint you!). An assertive person is not afraid to put something on the table or ask questions. They invite conversation, and do not quickly dismiss ideas that are different than their own. An assertive person wants to hear more information, and to weigh it against their own ideas and information.

There are many examples that reflect assertiveness, and I will share a few with you. You should expect to get your phone calls returned. It is reasonable to expect that you will get a call back within a day or two, and there is certainly no need to wait a week or more to get a call back. Ask people when they plan to get back to you about current issues or questions, and if they do not get back to you by that day, call them the next day. Communicate directly about what you would like, need, or are asking for, and then actively listen (see active listening below) to what is shared with you. Feel free to make your requests. Do not assume that a school or organization is going to say no. Do not be afraid to request extra meetings. Times of transition are particularly complicated, and multiple meetings over a short period of time may be what is needed for a smooth transition.

There is a counseling and psychology term called active listening. Active listening is a powerful tool for showing empathy, and for making sure that people understand each other. A variety of techniques have been developed to facilitate active listening. One common approach is to periodically paraphrase back to a person the most important points they are telling you. In a meeting with a school or agency you might restate the major points of a plan e.g. “If I understand correctly, you will be identifying 3-4 supported employment programs, sending them referral information about my daughter, and asking them to call our family for an intake interview.” The professional you are working with can then clarify any differences in understanding or verify that you are accurate. This includes a request to identify a timeline for each agreed upon action. Active listening can help individuals and families with their assertiveness.

Understanding the roles of agencies, schools, and programs is an important part of advocating for yourself or your loved one. Families are often frustrated with organizations because they misunderstand the purpose of the organization. This means that you will need at least a modest understanding of laws and regulations, and agency guidelines and procedures. You do not have to be an attorney, and school and agency

staff should be able to help clarify the laws, regulations, guidelines and procedures that govern what they do. If you ask an agency to pay for a service that they are prohibited to pay for by law, you will become frustrated if you continue to ask for them to pay for the service. If you ask a college to implement something from an IEP that would not be considered a reasonable accommodation, you might be frustrated. Title 5 of the Education Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act governs the college system, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act governs the K-12 system. Understand what the agency does, their role, and how they fit into the service delivery system as a whole.

I often share with families my recommendations on friendly, professional and assertive engagement, and then I share with them that I tell professionals the same thing. When you are working with families, be friendly, professional, and assertive. Professionals need to be assertive with getting good information from families, and then seeking out information that will meet the needs of the individual with a disability. The case carrier does not need to know the answer to your question when you ask it. They need to be able to understand what it is that you need or want, and then do a good job following up with the information, coordination of services, and referrals in a timely way. They need to actively listen to families, and it helps to paraphrase or recap the information shared from families. One of the best things a professional can do is spend a little quality time with a family so that they understand the family’s history, struggles, accomplishments, and things the individual and their family value.

One example of this is the Person Driven/Centered Process (PDP). Person Driven planning grew out of a commitment to inclusion as a social goal, and has been intentionally designed as an inclusive process. It is an attempt to ensure that the individual is in charge of their plans, goals, and dreams. Please see the following PDP Videos “[Take Charge: Leading the Transition to Adulthood](#)” produced by Dr, Caren Sax, SDSU Interwork Institute.

I tell professionals to avoid saying, “no,” or “we don’t do that.” There are things that a family may want a person or agency to do that they cannot do, but the best approach is for the professional to say something like, “Tell me more...” Teachers, administrators, and social workers can often come up with ideas, or help a family to develop a plan for what they want. The willingness to talk, share ideas, and make plans tells the family that you (the professional) are there to help even if the solution is not easy or readily apparent. People generally go into teaching, education and social services because they want to help people. It is important for families to remember this, and to appeal to that side of the professional when they are seeking help.

I am not an attorney, nor am I a legal expert. I would like to make a few comments regarding the inclusion of attorneys in the process. The decision to include an attorney in any of the processes that involve working with schools and agencies is a personal one. I will not make a recommendation one way or the other. Attorneys can be very expensive, and families should evaluate what is the best use of their personal resources. Before going to a private attorney, you may want



to consider contacting [Disability Rights California](#). Disability Rights California (DRC) is a nonprofit legal services organization founded in 1978 that advocates, educates, investigates and litigates to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities. There are some exceptional attorneys out there who have literally made the world a better place for people who have disabilities. I have seen cases where it appears that the individual and their family would not have gotten what they needed without an attorney. I have also seen families spend a lot of money on an attorney when what they really needed to do was sit down and talk with school or agency staff. Most people and organizations really want to do the right thing. That may not be absolutely true, but it is truer than not. Using the friendly, professional, and assertive approach often goes far!

## WHAT ARE THE APPLICABLE LAWS?

There are many laws intended to help people who have disabilities. Many of the organizations that support individuals with disabilities have links to laws and regulations (e.g. Department of Rehabilitation, Department of Developmental Services, California Department of Education, Orange County Department of Education, and Regional Centers). Here is a brief summary (with links) of some of the legislation relevant to the services and supports discussed in this book.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

IDEA (and the amendments to IDEA) is the law that mandates a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities. The law extends services to age 22 for many people who have disabilities. The law outlines requirements for Special Education and the Individualized Program Planning (IPP) process. You will find the law at: [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004](#).



### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

The Rehabilitation Act is a Federal law that authorizes services and supports provided by Vocational Rehabilitation, and it outlines protections, rights, and advocacy for people who have disabilities. Here is the link available through the U.S. Department of Education: [The Rehabilitation Act](#). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act affirms that organizations that receive Federal money, including postsecondary institutions, cannot discriminate against individuals with disabilities, and requires the provision of access and reasonable accommodations to people who have disabilities. This summary is offered through the California Department of Rehabilitation’s website: [Section 504](#).

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The ADA is a Federal law that bans discrimination toward persons with disabilities. The ADA can be found through the [U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division](#) website:

[The Americans with Disabilities Act](#). The law addresses issues of access and reasonable accommodations.



## **Title 5**

[Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations](#) outlines Education law in California for the Community Colleges, the [California State Universities](#), and the [University of California](#) system. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office outlines the Title 5 regulations for [DSPS](#) (Disabled Student Programs & Services), and gives guidance on [implementing the regulations](#).

## **Lanterman Act & Title 17**

The Regional Centers provide service coordination for individuals with developmental disabilities from birth through the entire lifespan. The laws and regulations that govern the Regional Centers and vendored service providers are the Lanterman Act and the California Code of Regulations, Title 17. The following resources are available through the California Department of Developmental Services website: [Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act](#), ["A Consumer's Guide to the Lanterman Act,"](#) and [Title 17](#).

## **Employment First Initiative California, AB 1041 10-9-13**

AB 1041 established an Employment First Policy. California became the 12<sup>th</sup> state to enact an employment first policy in law. [Employment First Policy from WIC Sect. 4869\(a\)\(1\)](#): It is the policy of the state that opportunities for integrated, competitive employment shall be given the highest priority for working age individuals with developmental disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. The Employment First Policy was established “in furtherance of the purposes of this division (the Lanterman Act) to make services and supports available to enable persons with developmental disabilities to approximate the pattern of everyday living available to people without disabilities of the same age, to support the integration of persons with developmental disabilities into the mainstream life of the community, and to bring about more independent, productive, and normal lives.”

The law defines some key concepts related to employment. Integrated Employment occurs “in work in a setting typically found in the community in which individuals interact with individuals without disabilities other than those who are



providing services to those individuals, to the same extent that individuals without disabilities in comparable positions interact with other persons.” Competitive Employment means “work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.” Microenterprises are “small businesses owned by individuals with developmental disabilities who have control and responsibility for decision-making and overseeing the business, with accompanying business licenses, taxpayer identification numbers other than social security numbers, and separate business bank accounts. Microenterprises may be considered integrated competitive employment.” Self-Employment means an employment setting in which an individual works in a chosen occupation, for profit or fee, in his or her own small business, with control and responsibility for decisions affecting the conduct of the business.

### **Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act (WIOA) [PL 113-128](#)**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is federal legislation that made significant changes to vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs in California and across the United States. WIOA, which replaces the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Rehabilitation Act of



1973, is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, and support services to succeed in the modern labor market. The law will encourage workforce development programs to help match employers with skilled workers needed to compete in the global economy.

WIOA provides detailed definitions and expectations. For

example, the act defines a student with a disability as any student enrolled in an educational program, including secondary, postsecondary or other recognized educational program, who meets the age requirements. Pre-employment transition services must be available statewide to all students with disabilities in need of such services without regard to type of disability. Trial work experiences must be used when conducting an exploration of an individual’s abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations. Competitive integrated employment requirements include a location typically found in the community where the person performs their work duties with other employees who do not have disabilities. All vocational rehabilitation professionals must have a “21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.”



## **ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Expectancy) Act 2014 HR 647**

The Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act created a new option for some people with disabilities and their families to save for the future, while protecting eligibility for public benefits. ABLE Accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families. The beneficiary of the account is the account owner, and income earned by the accounts will not be taxed. Contributions to the account made by any person (the account beneficiary, family and friends) will be made using post-taxed dollars and will not be tax deductible. Some states may allow for state income tax deductions for contributions made to an ABLE account.



Millions of individuals with disabilities and their families depend on a wide variety of public benefits for income, health care and food and housing assistance. Eligibility for these public benefits (SSI, SNAP, Medicaid) require meeting a means or resource test that limits eligibility to individuals to report more than \$2,000 in cash savings, retirement funds and other items of significant value. An individual must remain poor to remain eligible for these public benefits. The ABLE Act recognizes the extra and significant costs of living with a disability. These include costs, related to raising a child with significant disabilities or a working age adult with disabilities, for accessible housing and transportation, personal assistance services, assistive technology and health care not covered by insurance, Medicaid or Medicare. Eligible individuals and their families will be allowed to establish ABLE savings accounts that will not affect their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid and other public benefits. Additional Information is available at: [www.ablenrc.org](http://www.ablenrc.org).

### **CalABLE Act**

The CalABLE Act allows Californians with disabilities to open tax-free ABLE accounts without fear of losing vital government assistance. An ABLE account is a tax-advantaged savings account that can be established for the benefit of qualified individuals with disabilities. Contributions to the account, currently limited to \$14,000 per year, can be made by family, friends, or the beneficiary themselves. The account's earnings are allowed to accumulate tax-free, and the withdrawals, provided they are applied to qualifying disability expenses, are tax-free. One of the biggest benefits of the ABLE account is that the savings held in the account, up to a current \$100,000 limit, is not counted against the \$2,000 limit on personal assets for individuals to qualify for public benefits. Additional Information is available at: <http://treasurer.ca.gov/able/>.



## HELPFUL WEBSITES

[California Association for Postsecondary Education and Disability \(CAPED\)](#)

[California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office](#)

[Disability Benefits 101](#)

[The California Department of Rehabilitation](#)

[The California Department of Education](#)

[The California Department of Developmental Services \(and Regional Center links\)](#)

[The United States Social Security Administration](#)

[Medi-Cal](#)

[Cal-Optima](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

## Transition, A Conversation with Parents

A Guide for Individuals with Disabilities, their Parents, and the Professionals  
Dedicated to Serving Them, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

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## About North Orange Continuing Education

North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE) has been serving the community since 1973 with tuition-free, state-supported, noncredit educational programs and services from high school completion, English-language acquisition, career technical education training, disability support services, parenting, emeritus, and self-development courses. NOCE serves more than 29,000 students annually, ranging from preschoolers to seniors, at three Center locations in Anaheim, Cypress, and Wilshire (Fullerton) as well as over 100+ community-based locations. NOCE is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges. NOCE is a member of North Orange County Community College District, which also includes credit-based colleges Cypress College and Fullerton College. Part of the California Community College System, all NOCE courses are approved by the state of California.



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*The North Orange County Community College District's (NOCCCD) North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE) Administrative Offices are located at 1830 W. Romneya Drive in Anaheim, California 92801. For more information, call 714.808.4645 or visit [www.noce.edu](http://www.noce.edu). It is the policy of NOCCCD to provide an educational, employment, and business environment in which no person shall be unlawfully subjected to discrimination or sexual harassment, nor unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of District programs or activities on the basis of ethnic group identification, national origin, religion, age, gender, race, color, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability as defined and prohibited by state and federal statutes. The District is also committed to maintaining campuses that are free of harassment, drugs and alcohol. To read the entire NOCCCD nondiscrimination statement, see the policy in the General Information section in the back of the NOCE class schedule.*

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