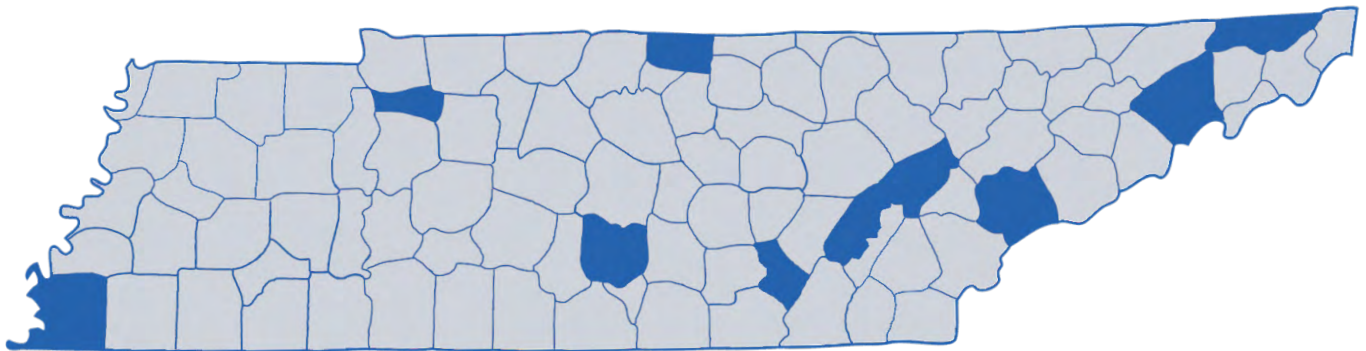


Technical Assistance

FAMILY TIP SHEETS: PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



Transition TN offers online and in-person resources to prepare transition-age youth with disabilities for life after high school. We created this series of tip sheets for family members on topics they need more information about. Our guide provides ideas on how to disseminate these tip sheets to family members in your school district.

TRANSITIONTN.ORG

INTRODUCTION

Families are a critical partner throughout the entire transition planning process. They need accessible resources explaining how they can support their son or daughter in working toward post school goals. It can also be challenging for parents to navigate the complex world of adult services as their son or daughter prepares to leave high school. This series of tip sheets can serve as a jumping off point for families to learn about areas in transition and post school services they might not be familiar with.

WHAT FAMILIES NEED TO KNOW

We have created practical resources on a series of topics families often need more information about:

- SSI/Benefits and Work Incentives
- Waiver programs such as ECF CHOICES
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Diploma options and student pathways
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Financial aid for postsecondary education options

Each tip sheet is broken down into four main sections:

- **The Basics**
A brief explanation of the topic
- **Myths**
Breaking down common myths associated with the topic
- **Questions I Should Ask**
A list of questions families should take with them when meeting with agencies and experts
- **Where Can I Learn More?**
Contact information and additional online resources

The tip sheets are not intended to be a comprehensive guide on these topics. Our goal is to provide the basics on each topic and point parents to more specific information.

GETTING THESE TIP SHEETS INTO THE HANDS OF FAMILIES

Here are some ideas for how educators and school districts can get these tip sheets into the hands of families:

Family Nights

Hand them out at family nights. Whenever you have events for families, hand out these tip sheets. Even if the family night is focused on something different than the topics of the tip sheets, it's important to capitalize on any opportunity where you have families in the room.

Counselors and Staff

Share these with school counselors, administrators, and other education professionals. It's important for family members to get accurate information from all education professionals they encounter. Share these tip sheets with school counselors, administrators, and other teachers so as many people as possible are sharing consistent information.

IEP Meetings

Discuss them at IEP meetings. Give the tip sheets to parents at IEP meetings and use them as conversation starters about the different topics.

Share with Students

Give them to students to share with their families. Hand out these tip sheets to students to give to their parents.

Website

Include them on your district website. If you have a special education section on your website, include these tip sheets and point parents to where they can access those resources when you get questions about the information they include.

Social Media

Send them out in a newsletter and on social media. Make sure these tip sheets are included in any newsletter or social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). These direct forms of communication with the public are a great way to disseminate information.

OUR COMMITMENT

We will gather a focus group comprised of family members from school districts we work with. These family members will review the tip sheets and let us know if the content and format is helpful. If you have questions or think of other tip sheets that could be added to this list, please let us know! Contact info@transitiontn.org.

FAMILY TIP SHEETS:

What Should I Know About How Work Impacts SSI Benefits?

The Basics

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program gives monthly payments to children and adults with disabilities who have very little income or resources. In Tennessee, a person who gets SSI will also get TennCare.

Myths

Myth #1: My child will lose my SSI paycheck if they get a job

If your child gets a job, SSI will reduce the amount of their payment over time. The more income they have, the less their SSI check will be. A person will always make more in wages than they will lose in benefits.

Myth #2: My child will lose TennCare if they get a job

As long as a person is receiving any SSI payment, they will keep TennCare. Even if your child makes too much to receive an SSI payment, they can maintain TennCare coverage unless they make over \$40,000. Your child would still need to meet the SSI disability criteria.

Who Can Help Me?

Benefits to Work is a program in Tennessee that can help you understand how benefits will be impacted by working.

Contact a Benefits to Work counselor:

<https://go.transitiontn.org/benefits-work>
1 (888) 839-5333

Contact your Social Security office:

<https://go.transitiontn.org/ContactSS>
1 (877) 808-5461

What Questions Should I Ask?

- How much can my child make before they will lose their SSI payment?
- How can I figure out how much lower my child's SSI check will be if they begin working?
- How will savings affect my child's SSI check?
- Who do I contact if I think my child's SSI amount is not correct or I need to update information?
- What work incentives are my child eligible for?
- What do I need to prepare for my child's Age 18 determination or redetermination?

Myth #3: My child will not be able to get their SSI payments back if they stop working or lose their job

Your child can reapply for SSI. If they continue to receive TennCare after losing SSI, they won't need to go through the entire application process again to get their SSI payments back.

Myth #4: My child will automatically continue to receive SSI payments after the age of 18

Your child might continue to receive SSI payments after the age of 18, but the SSI program will do a review of their case. The SSI program has different eligibility criteria for adults than children. Adults have to prove they are unable to work due to their disability. Before the age of 18, contact your local Social Security office and ask what you need to do to assure SSI will continue.

FAMILY TIP SHEET SERIES:

What Should I Know About Diploma Options?

The Basics

Tennessee has four diploma options for students graduating from public high schools. Students have until the May following their 21st birthday to finish requirements for the diploma.

- The **regular high school diploma** is the traditional diploma for high school students.
- The **special education diploma** is for students who receive special education services and are not able to meet the requirements of the regular high school diploma.
- The **occupational diploma** focuses on job/career skills for students. It requires independent completion of certain tasks.
- The **alternate academic diploma** is an option for students who take the state's alternate assessments. It is aligned with the coursework load for a student getting a regular high school diploma.

Who Can Help Me?

Talk to your student's teacher and the rest of the IEP team to make a decision about diploma options.

If you are concerned that your IEP team is not providing your son or daughter with the right supports or diploma path, contact Disability Rights Tennessee:
1(800) 342-1660
Gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org

Myths

Myth #1: My child has to choose between the

What Questions Should I Ask?

- Can my child complete the requirements for a regular diploma by the time he or she is 21?
- What supports and accommodations have the IEP team provided to help my child get a regular high school diploma?
- Which diploma will help my child meet their career or education goals?
- When can my child change their diploma option during high school?

occupational and alternate academic diploma

Students can earn both the occupational and alternate academic diploma. Most students will work on the requirements for the alternate academic diploma first, before completing the two years of work experience needed for the occupational diploma.

Myth #2: It doesn't matter which diploma my child gets

The kind of diploma you earn will affect your job or college options. If you do not get a regular high school diploma, you can't attend four-year colleges, universities, or community colleges. Special education diplomas are often not recognized by employers.

Myth #3: I need to make a decision on the type of diploma for my child in their first year of high school

It's good to begin thinking about diploma options early. However, you don't need to make the decision on the diploma options during freshman year. The IEP team can't even decide about the occupational diploma until the end of sophomore year. You can revisit the diploma option during high school.

FAMILY TIP SHEET SERIES:

What Should I Know About Vocational Rehabilitation?

The Basics

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program helps people with disabilities get jobs. A VR counselor will decide if your child is eligible for VR services. The counselor will work with your child to help them come up with a career plan. They will also help figure out what services and supports they need to meet their career goals.

Myths

Myth #1: My child can't meet with vocational rehabilitation until they turn 18

Vocational rehabilitation should be involved before your child turns 18. VR can come into the school to do Pre-Employment Transition Services beginning at age 14. Your child doesn't need to be eligible for VR to get these transition services. They can also apply for VR before they turn 18. The VR counselor can attend IEP meetings and work with the student on developing an employment plan before they leave high school. Parents can request Vocational Rehabilitation to attend meetings when students are 14-16.

Myth #2: My child has too severe a disability to get vocational rehabilitation services

- ### What Questions Should I Ask?
- What do I need to prepare before my first meeting with a counselor? What items do I need to bring?
 - Are Pre-Employment Transition Services in my child's school? If not, how can I get them in the school?
 - Is there someone I can contact if I disagree with a decision by VR?
 - Is there a waiting list for services?
 - What types of services does VR provide?
 - What will the process look like for developing my child's Individualized Plan for Employment (or IPE)?
 - What are the assessment options VR can provide to help my child figure out what they want to do for a job?
 - If my child finds a job, how long will VR provide assistance?

Who Can Help Me?

Call your local VR office to schedule an appointment with a VR counselor. Find the closest office to you:

(615) 313-4891

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/office-locator-trc-ttap.html>

If you need additional information about vocational rehabilitation or have concerns about services provided/not provided, contact the Client Assistance Program:

<https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/get-help>
1(800) 342-1660

There is no disability considered too severe to receive VR services. VR must serve people with the most significant disabilities first.

Myth #3: I will have to pay for any services my child receives

Most people do not pay for their services through VR. You might be asked to pay for some of your services depending on how much money you have.

Myth #4: VR won't help my child with college

Vocational rehabilitation helps people with disabilities find a career, not just get a job. If your child's job goal requires education or training, VR might help fund college or training programs needed for that career.