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# Employment Pathway

## Accompanying Family Guide

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This resource has been developed to help families navigate the transition out of high school and into employment. In this guide you will find important information discussed in school based transition meetings.



AUTISM PROGRAMS  
School Support Program



# Pathway to the Workplace/Employment:

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This guide has been developed to help families plan for their teenager's transition to adulthood and become familiar with available community resources. Although students can stay in school until June of the year they turn 21 it is advisable to begin exploring opportunities while in the first couple years of high school.

## Building Networks

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Start building a network outside of school and immediate family well before high school graduation (start as early as possible). To build networks, you can:

- Connect with other families that have children the same age
- Join family support groups
- Attend workshops
- Register for programs at community centre or library
- Connect within the community based on interests of the individual (e.g. swimming- go to pools, cooking- go to grocery stores etc.).

It is important to explore and expose your teenager to different experiences and environments as early and as often as possible. Recreation and leisure opportunities allows for the development of different skills (eg. social skills, gross motor, independence, daily living etc.).

### **Respiteservices.com**

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

To help navigate services at any age, register with [respiteservices.com](http://www.respiteservices.com)

**phone:** 416-322-6317    **email:** [info@respiteservices.com](mailto:info@respiteservices.com)

### **Connectability.ca**

<http://connectability.ca/en/>

Register with [connectability.ca](http://connectability.ca). Website has information on family support groups within the city, social events and articles on many topics. Also has “Connected Families”, which is an online network where families and professionals can share knowledge and resources with others.

### **My Community Hub**

[www.mycommunityhub.ca](http://www.mycommunityhub.ca)

Online registration for community events and programs offered by Developmental Services Ontario.

## Community Resource Directory (Surrey Place Centre)

Includes sections such as family support, financial services, recreational services and camps etc. There are two versions: children and youth version up to 18 years and adult version 18+.

<http://www.surreyplace.on.ca/resources-publications/community-resource-directory/>

Online searchable option: [www.communityresourcedirectory.ca](http://www.communityresourcedirectory.ca)

# Independence

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Your teen's level of independence can influence options after graduation. Many work readiness and community programs do not offer 1:1 support, so fostering independence is important.

To determine which skills would be essential to develop think,

*"if my child doesn't learn the skill, will someone else have to do it for them?"*

Whenever possible, go into community settings in which your teenager will eventually be spending more time. Regular practice in a natural environment is key e.g. if goal is to make a purchase at the grocery store then this should be practiced once a day not once a week. Once a skill is taught, provide as little assistance as necessary. As more independence is gained, add more responsibility.

## Ontario Photo Card

Government issued identification (ID) for people without a driver's license. Can apply with ServiceOntario at 16 years. This ID can be used to open a bank account.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-photo-card>

# Transportation

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Using public transportation can greatly increase independence and opportunities within the community. Any type of transportation experience is good. Consider the age and stage of development of your individual teenager. Using public transportation could range from independent use of public transportation to riding a bus/subway with a group. The key is to have your teenager as comfortable and as independent as possible.

If appropriate: Try to slowly fade using the school bus (this can start in grade 10 and continue to the end of high school). Minimal experience with the TTC or other methods of transportation will limit options after high school and as a result can cause isolation.

## TTC Support Person Card

This card allows one support person to ride the TTC for free when they are with the person with the disability. A card holder is the person with the disability and he or she may travel with different support persons at different times. Can apply in person or mail it in with passport photo. [https://www.ttc.ca/Fares\\_and\\_passes/Support\\_Person\\_Card/faq.jsp](https://www.ttc.ca/Fares_and_passes/Support_Person_Card/faq.jsp)

Investigate if there are any TTC training programs in the community e.g. Community Living. Connectability.ca or mycommunityhub.ca may have listings of programs offered.

## Skills to Build Independence at Home

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You can help your teenager practice building independence skills with the following suggestions:

- Chores for responsibility (make bed, clean bedroom, put away belongings, etc.)
- Life skill development (do laundry, pack lunch, prepare meals, grocery shop, etc.)
- Attention to personal hygiene
- Involvement in leisure activities
- Increasing flexibility (changing routine, dinner time, favourite cereal is out of stock in grocery store)
- Banking skills

## Self-Advocacy and Self-Disclosure

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Self-advocacy is one of the most important skills your teenager can have. Self-advocacy skills include self-awareness, decision making and problem solving. Becoming comfortable with communicating the nature of their disability and their accommodations is essential for success in school and in life. The best way to do this is to role-play and practice.

Some things to role-play/practice include:

- Understanding of autism and how it affects him/her personally
- Understanding of strengths, needs and interests
- Recognizing when they need help and how to get help
- Reviewing what accommodations may be needed on the job
- Participation in the IEP process as early as possible and as much as possible

## Self-Disclosure

Deciding to whom, when and where to disclose is an important component of self-advocacy. For some, disclosing that they have a disability may not be a straightforward and easy decision. There are benefits to disclosing but it is always a personal decision, and one that your teenager must make for themselves. This is something that requires lots of thought and practice as well.

Employers may lack awareness of the type of accommodations/on the job supports someone may need and how it may affect their business potential. Discussing needed accommodations with the employer ahead of time may save time and future issues.

It is an individual's choice to disclose personal information to an employer. A diagnosis does not need to be disclosed, however, an individual needs to self-advocate the accommodations they may need at the workplace.

<https://connectability.ca/2017/12/04/adults-on-the-autism-spectrum/>

## Gaining Experience/Deciding on Employment

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Gaining experience is important for many reasons. These experiences can help develop skills for everyday living (e.g. banking) and in their field of choice (e.g. volunteering for gaming conference when they want to get into video game design). Also, youth with ASD are more likely to find work if they have meaningful work experience during high school. These can be learning opportunities such as volunteer work or part-time jobs. Exposure and rehearsing job finding skills (e.g. resume writing, interviewing etc.) can be critical for successful outcomes

Below are some examples of possible opportunities to gain experience or build job specific skills within the community. Some examples include:

- Participating in extracurricular clubs at schools (chess, robotics, sports teams etc.)
- Parks and rec programs, workshops, specialty classes
- Volunteering [www.volunteertoronto.ca](http://www.volunteertoronto.ca)
- Community classes: Michaels craft store, Home Depot, Public Library, etc.
- Employment Ontario <https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>

### Create a Portfolio

Individuals with ASD may have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge, skills and talents based on an interview alone. They may need to “sell” their skills by creating a portfolio including:

- Work samples, photos of work
- Certificates and accomplishments
- Volunteer experiences
- Reference letters
- List of talents and strong interests
- Resume

# Marketing Strengths for Employment

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When looking for job opportunities it is a good idea to build upon your teenager’s technical skills or special interests. Employers are looking for employees that benefit the company.

It is important to market students according to their strengths, not their perceived disability. Individuals with ASD can bring unique qualities to the workplace. What many may find redundant and repetitive may actually be a good fit for the employer and person with ASD.

Reframe your thinking by turning negative traits into positive employability skills

<b>Stereotypical ASD Trait</b>	<b>Positive Employability Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Fixates on details</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A passion and attention for detail</li><li>● Pattern recognition</li><li>● Spot deviances in data information and systems</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Somewhat of a loner</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Approaches tasks with extreme focus and independence</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Perceived as rude by others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Honest and straightforward</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Appears skeptical</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Approaches tasks with a critical eye, perfectionist</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Difficulty with change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● An aptitude for tasks that require order and structure</li><li>● Tolerance for repetitive activities</li></ul>

Complete job inventory checklists to see types of jobs that may be relevant.

Myblueprint.ca is a resource used at school to help with course selections and career planning. Students will have their own logins. <https://app.myblueprint.ca/?sdid=TCDSB>

The social navigation of a job can be the most difficult to master for individuals with ASD. Not surprisingly, individuals that engage in challenging behaviors and unexpected social interactions will find it difficult to gain and maintain competitive employment. It may be necessary to explicitly teach aspects of the work environment.

# Job Supports and Accommodations

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Having a good support system is crucial - it can include specific accommodations, on the job supports and/or a job coach. Individuals that access job coaching and on the job supports are more likely to find and maintain employment. Surprisingly, not all accommodations are complicated or costly; the majority have no cost, or are under \$500.

Become aware of services in the community that support job finding, pre-employment skills and build strong connections with community partners. Some possible options may be:

- Employment Ontario. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>
- Job Opportunity Information Network: <http://joininfo.ca/>
- JVS Toronto: <https://www.jvstoronto.org/find-a-job/disability-employment-services/>
- Project Work: <http://www.projectwork.ca/frameset.html>
- Specialisterne: <http://ca.specialisterne.com>
- Autism Job Club: <http://autismjobclub.ca/index.html> \*register to receive information
- Ready Willing & Able: <http://readywillingable.ca/job-seekers/>
- Impact Program – New Haven: <https://connectability.ca/2017/07/04/impact-a-newly-developed-work-placement-and-vocational-training-program-for-young-adults-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-asd/>
- Geneva Centre Transitioning Youth: <https://www.autism.net/services/services-for-youth-and-adults-transitioning-youth-ages-13-18.html>
- Geneva Centre: <http://torontofinancialdistrict.com/geneva-centre-for-autism/>
- Worktopia Employment: <http://worktopia.ca/employment-works/>
- Worktopia Community: <http://worktopia.ca/community-works/>
- South Asian Autism Awareness Centre: <http://saaac.org/programs-services/livingnlearning-day-program/>
- Corbrook Success Through Education and Employment Retention – STEER: <http://corbrook.com/programs/fee-for-servicepassport/>
- Youth Skills Connection Program: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/skills-and-job-training-young-people>
- Youth Job Connections: <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/yjc.html>
- Autism Works Method: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/teaching-pre-employment-skills-1417-year-oldsthe-autism-joanne-lara>
- Youth Employment Support: <http://thecentre.on.ca/jobseekers/youthjoblink/>
- Youth Job Connection: [www.yes.on.ca/youth-job-connection/](http://www.yes.on.ca/youth-job-connection/)
- Focus on Youth Summer Program: [www.tcdsb.org/FORSTUDENTS/FocusOnYouth/Pages/Default.aspx](http://www.tcdsb.org/FORSTUDENTS/FocusOnYouth/Pages/Default.aspx)

# Further Learning Opportunities

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For some it will be important to look at further education/skill building options prior to starting work. Vocational programs promote independence and provide job skills training with a combination of classroom instruction and on the job learning experiences. It focuses on assisting individuals to make the transition from school to work.

## Possible options:

- CICE Program at Humber College: <https://healthsciences.humber.ca/programs/cice-ontario-college-certificate.html#SchoolProgramDetails/ProgramCampusAvailability>
- CICE Program at Durham College: <http://www.durhamcollege.ca/programs/community-integration-through-cooperative-education>
- CICE programs in Ontario <https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/programs/education-community-and-social-services/inclusive-education>
- George Brown: <https://www.georgebrown.ca/A101-2016-2017/>
- York Region Listings:  
<http://www.centralhealthline.ca/listServices.aspx?id=10443&region=YorkToront>

## Essential Skills Upgrading Programs/Adult Literacy Programs:

- Check 211 Toronto essential skills upgrading or continuing education opportunities.
- Toronto Public Library Adult Literacy Programs  
<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/adult-literacy/index.jsp>  
Leap into Literacy; helps to build foundational literacy skills for adults with intellectual disabilities
- Continuing education/adult literacy programs <https://www.ontario.ca/page/adult-learning>
- Frontier College <https://www.frontiercollege.ca/>
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre <http://dpnchc.com/programs/adults/>
- The Alexandra Park Learning Centre <http://www.apnlc.org/>



# Adult Services/Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

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Ministry funded Adult Services (Developmental Services Ontario; DSO) are available only to those who are eligible. In order to determine eligibility call to register with DSO at age 16 years 416-925-5141. Website: <http://www.dsonario.ca/agencies/dso-toronto>

To confirm eligibility, DSO will request reports and documents such as psychoeducational or developmental assessment, IEP, proof of identity (assessment available in OSR) etc.

To find a list of programs that you can pay for: Go to [www.connectability.ca](http://www.connectability.ca) adult; topics; community participation supports; fee for service directory.

“Community hub” is an online registry program available on connectability.ca

## **Important documents to assist with future needs:**

Keep a record of important document such as: psychological reports, IEP, report cards, diagnosis, IPRC forms, medical information/assessments. These will be useful if your teenager will be applying to any government assistance or work readiness programs.

# Ontario Disability Support Program/ODSP

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There are 2 types of ODSP support: [www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/)

**Income Support:** helps pay for living expenses, health benefits (drug and dental). May include, possible funding for special diets, incontinence supplies, transportation to medical appointments and medical supplies. Speak to ODSP worker for info.

**Employment Support:** helps people with disabilities who are able to work, prepare for and find a job.

[http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment\\_support/what.aspx](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment_support/what.aspx)

## **To Apply for ODSP:**

- Apply at 17.5 years
- Proof of disability needed \*\*letter of eligibility from DSO, or psychological/medical report stating diagnosis.
- ODSP will determine financial eligibility
- You can apply online at [www.ontario.ca/socialassistance](http://www.ontario.ca/socialassistance) or in person. Website for ODSP offices locations <http://appow.mcsc.gov.on.ca/OfficeLocator/index.aspx?lang=en>

# Mental Health and Well Being

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Teens with ASD are at higher risk for depression and anxiety. It is important to anticipate and understand changes to ease the transition and effectively plan for the future. Developing coping strategies and seeking appropriate support are good skills to practice before the transition to a new environment.

Not all mental health professionals will be familiar with unique challenges experienced by teenagers with ASD. Some of the mental health services listed in this section are designed specifically for teenagers with ASD. Mental health services are separate from developmental services, and must be accessed separately.

## Possible Mental Health Services for Youth in Toronto

● Shoniker Clinic
● Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre
● East Metro Youth Services (What's Up Walk-in, AYCES (Asperger's Youth for Community Engagement and Socialization))
● Delisle Youth Services
● Distress Centre of Toronto
● Hicks-Dellcrest Children's Mental Health Centre
● Integrated Services for Autism and Neurodevelopmental disorders (ISAND)
● Integra Program at Child Development Institute (CDI)
● Turning Point Youth Services
● Unison Health Community Services
● Youthdale Treatment Centre
● Youth Link (What's Up Walk-in...)
● Surrey Place Centre Community Resource Directory for further assistance

# Long Term Planning

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It's never too early to start planning for the future. To begin, consider these options:

- Apply for social insurance
- Open a bank account and practice money skills
- Open and contribute to RDSP (Government contributes through matching grants and bonds)
- Apply for Disability Tax Credit Certificate with CRA (form T2201)

For advice regarding Power of Attorney, RDSP, Henson Trusts, ODSP, Tax credits etc., speak to professionals specializing in planning for people with a disability.

There are organizations specific to future planning for individuals with a disability. Many have been formed by families of individuals with a disability. Some have useful webinars on future planning topics, free resources and may offer advice and planning support.

*If any organizations offer products or services for sale, make sure you are fully aware of what you are purchasing and that all your questions are answered.*

## **Planning Organizations:**

The Special Needs Planning Group

[www.specialneedsplanning.ca](http://www.specialneedsplanning.ca)

Partners for Planning (Register to be connected to many resources and webinars)

<http://www.partnersforplanning.ca>

Families for a Secure Future Website

[www.familiesforasecurefuture.ca](http://www.familiesforasecurefuture.ca)

Life Trust Website

[www.life-trust.com/](http://www.life-trust.com/)

Special Needs and Disability Estate Planning Lawyer: Kenneth Pope LLB, TEP

<https://kpopelaw.com> provides free resources to help families with long term planning

Inspiring Possibilities, Estate Planning Guide (Community Living Ontario)

<http://www.planinspiringpossibilities.com/>