



A FAMILY GUIDE:

Employment Pathway

PROVIDED BY THE TCDSB SPECIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND

SURREYPLACE



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IN GOD'S IMAGE: *Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope*

This guide is for informational purposes only. Information may change without TCDSB or SP knowledge. Families are encouraged to research best options for their situation. TCDSB and SP do not endorse specific products or services. Revised Sept 2024.

About this Resource

This guide has been developed to support you in thinking and planning for your child's transition out of high school. Although students can stay in school until June of the year they turn 21, it is advisable to begin preparing for the transition and exploring opportunities while in the first couple years of high school.

Pathway to Employment

"Employment is a very important part of our adult lives. It is much more than simply earning money. Through paid work we meet new people and establish new friendships, increase feelings of self-worth, enable greater independence, become part of a community and contribute to that community. Perhaps more importantly it affects how other people and society in general view us — recognizing our value, contribution, ability, and capacity" (People First of Canada. (2019). *Ready, Willing, and Able: People with intellectual disabilities*).

Ministry of Ontario Supports and Programs

All students who have a disability, no matter the level of support needed, should determine if they are eligible for Adult Services and support through the following Ministry of Ontario programs. The types of employment support accessed through these programs will depend on each individual and available government resources.

1. Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)



Ministry funded Adult Services, [Developmental Services Ontario](#) (DSO) are available only to those who are eligible. To determine eligibility, call to register at age 16.

Phone: 1-855-372-3858.

Calls are answered by 211, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week in multiple languages.

Email: dsotr@surreyplace.ca

DSO can help with:

- Community Participation Supports (day programs, employment supports)
- Passport Funding
- Person-Directed Planning (individualized goal setting and planning)
- Family Support Worker (FSW)
- Supportive Housing

Important Information Regarding Adult Services

- To confirm eligibility, DSO will request psychoeducational or developmental assessments, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and proof of identity.
- For those who meet the criteria, DSO will provide a letter of eligibility. Keep this letter, it can be used to apply for ODSP.
- Wait time is prioritized by need.
- Contact DSO to update them about your current situation, including:
 - Change of address or phone number.
 - Changes to the caregiver's ability to support the individual.
 - Significant changes to the individual's support needs, for example a change in medical status or behaviour.
 - To update or discuss services and supports.
 - If the individual or family are approaching a crisis, for example homelessness, or hospitalization of the individual or caregiver.



For more information about DSO, watch this video

[Preparing students with developmental disabilities for life after high school](#)

2. Passport Funding Program

Ministry funding such as [Special Services at Home \(SSAH\)](#) and services through [Ontario Autism Program \(OAP\)](#) end at 18 years old. Adults registered and eligible for DSO can apply for funding through Passport at 18 years (contact DSO).

[Passport Funding](#) is a reimbursement program, you are not provided with the funds up front. Criteria for things that are eligible for Passport Funding do change. If you are unsure, then please contact Passport to inquire before making a purchase. If you are not sure how to use the funding, please contact DSO or Passport for ideas. Access to funding is subject to available resources.

Use your Passport Funding amount within the fiscal year, which is from April 1st to March 31 every year. Funds do not get carried over from one fiscal year to another.

Examples of what Passport Funding can be used for:

- Community Participation Supports (e.g., employment supports, job coach)
- Recreation and leisure activities (e.g., gym memberships, museum passes)
- Transportation to activities (e.g., Presto pass, taxi)
- Person-Directed Planning
- Personal Support Worker



For more information about Passport Funding, watch this video, [Introduction to the Passport Program](#)

3. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)



[Ontario Disability Support Program](#) provides income support and employment support for adults with disabilities.

Income Support - Helps pay for living expenses and health benefits (drug and dental). It may include funding for special diets, transportation to medical appointments and medical supplies.

Employment Support - Helps people with a disability, who are ready to work, find a job and keep a job. [ODSP Employment Support](#) connects people with community-based service providers who deliver the support.

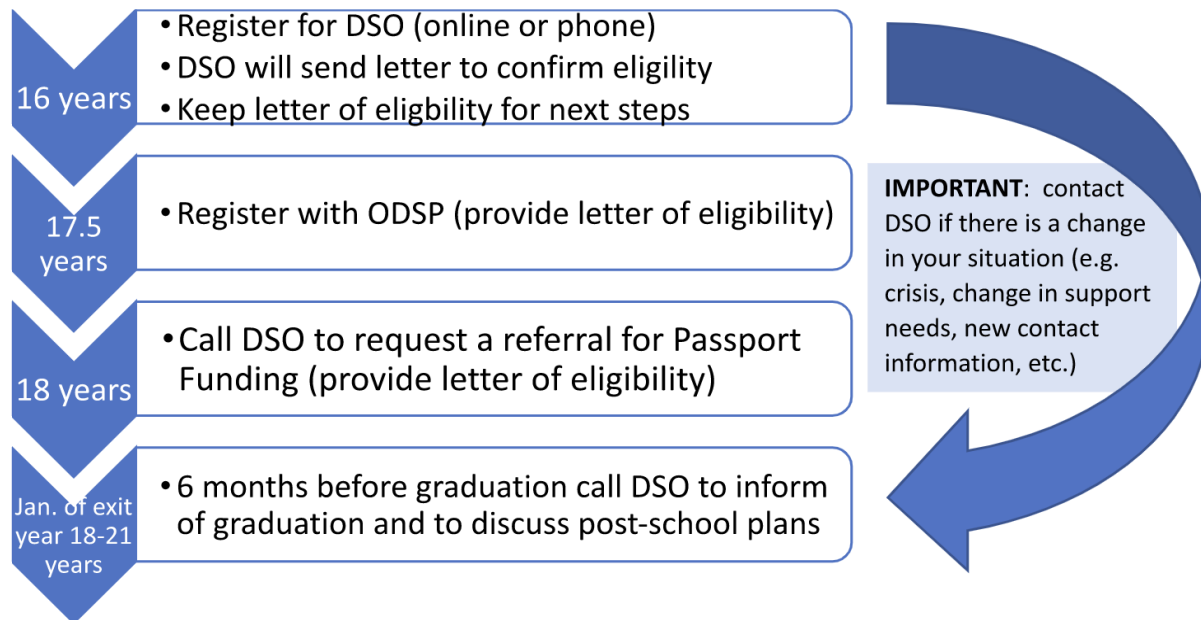
To Apply to ODSP income support:

- Apply at 17.5 years
- Proof of disability is needed. You can use the letter of eligibility from DSO.
- Apply to ODSP, [online](#) or in-person using the [ODSP Office Locator](#)

Once school is over, it is very likely that there will be a long wait period for adult services. Consider saving a portion of ODSP funds to pay for future community programs.

Shifting from Children Services to Adult Services

When your teenager turns 18, children services will end, and new adult services may begin. Transitioning to adult services is a process that requires planning. There are important timeframes that require actions in order to access services.



CONTACT INFORMATION

DSO - [DSO Toronto Region - Surrey Place](#) In Toronto call, 1-855-372-3858 or email dsotr@surreyplace.ca

PASSPORT FUNDING - [Family Service Toronto](#) In Toronto call, 416-780-1106 or email passport@familyservicetoronto.org

ODSP - [Ontario Disability Support Program](#) Use the ODSP Office Locator to find the contact information for your particular office.

Creating Opportunities

When preparing for the employment pathway it is important for your child to develop their skills, experiences and qualifications in a variety of ways, at school, in the home and in the community. High schools offer opportunities for exposure to work experience and co-operative education. It is advisable to connect with the Guidance Department and Resource Department to discuss these opportunities. There are also many things that can be done in the home and the community to support the skills needed for future employment.

1. Building Independence

The greater the independence an individual has, the more options they will have upon graduation. 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?”* Review the list below for suggestions on developing independence.

- **Increase Responsibilities and Daily Life Skills**
 - Apply for a social insurance number
 - Open a bank account, learn basic banking skills, learn to budget
 - Make a grocery list, go shopping, cook meals
 - Assign regular chores
 - Develop an independent daily hygiene routine (shower, brush teeth, shave, deodorant, clean clothing)
 - Set an alarm clock
- **Increase Flexibility**
 - Change routine
 - Try new things
- **Use Public Transportation** - Minimal experience using public transportation will limit options after high school and as a result can cause isolation.
 - Plan to use different types of transportation (e.g., taxi, Uber, TTC, Go Train).
 - If your child is taking the school bus, slowly fade its use.
 - TTC [Support Person Assistance Card](#) allows one support person to ride the TTC for free when they are with the person with the disability.
 - [Wheel-Trans](#) provides a safe and reliable transportation option for persons with disabilities.
 - [Fair Pass Transit Discount Program - Toronto](#) provides a discount for eligible users for one year. This is income dependent. Those who receive ODSP are eligible for this program.
 - Investigate travel training programs in the community. The TTC provides a free [Travel Training](#) program.

- **Practice Self-Advocacy**
 - Slowly fade 1:1 support.
 - Allow your child to anticipate their own needs and ask for what they need.
 - Role-play and practice various situations.
 - Support your child to participate in their IEP (read it, attend and contribute to meetings) to help them understand and communicate their strengths and challenges as well as how they can support themselves and how others can support them.
- **Support Independence in the Community**
 - Have a plan for any emergency that may occur.
 - Carry identification as well as emergency contact information.
 - [Ontario Photo Card](#) - Government issued identification (ID) for people without a driver's license; can be used to open a bank account; apply with Service Ontario at 16 years.
 - [My Hospital Form](#) or [About My Health](#) - tools to help prepare for health care appointments and communicate with doctors.
 - [One-Page Profile](#) - create a single page handout with your child that outlines the things that are important to them, and how best to support them. This information can help your child self-advocate when working with new people.

2. Gaining Experience

Everything your child does is an opportunity to gain experience towards future employment. Experience can be gained in a number of ways, and it is important to explore and expose your child to as many different opportunities, people, and environments as possible. For suggestions on how to gain experience see the list below.

- **Work experience**
 - Non-credit job experiences
 - Placements can occur within the school building or in the community.
- **Co-operative Education (Co-op)**
 - Credit earning courses for grade 11 or 12 students that combine class work with practical experience in the community.
 - For more information speak with your Guidance Counselor.

- **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)**
 - Allows students in high school to explore apprenticeship opportunities and careers in the skilled trades.
 - [OYAP](#) generally starts in grade 11 or grade 12 and is accessed through the cooperative education program at the high school.
 - For more information speak with your Guidance Counselor.
- **School Board Based Transition to Work Programs**
 - [Transition to Work Program | Monsignor Fraser College](#) provides students who are 18-20 years old the opportunity to learn workplace skills in a supportive environment within the TCDSB.
 - [Project SEARCH Toronto](#) is a school to work transition program for students in their final year of high school that occurs entirely at a workplace. It involves classroom instruction, and hands-on training through work placements.
- **Volunteer**
 - Go to [Volunteer Toronto](#) or [Ontario Volunteer Centre Network](#) for ideas.
 - Check with the Guidance Department for more opportunities.
- **Extracurricular Activities in School**
 - Teams and clubs at schools (chess, robotics, sports teams etc.)
- **Summer or Part-time Job**
 - [Employment programs for people under 30 | ontario.ca](#) check out the summer jobs for students link for specific programs such as Youth Job Connection Summer Program
 - [TCDSB Focus On Youth](#)
- **Recreation and Leisure**
 - Join a team, club, or other organized activity to build skills like teamwork, social skills, problem-solving skills.
 - [Special Olympics](#) Register as an athlete to participate in a variety of sports for people with intellectual disabilities throughout the year.
 - [Access2Card](#) This card can give a support person free entrance to a variety of entertainment venues.
 - [City of Toronto Recreation](#) A variety of recreation programs including certification and employment readiness programs for youth who are interested in working at City of Toronto Recreation programs.
 - [Welcome Policy – Recreation Fee Subsidy – City of Toronto](#) for families who need financial assistance to enroll in City of Toronto Parks and Recreation programs. Eligibility depends on family income.

3. Building Networks

Start building a network outside of school and immediate family well before high school graduation. Building upon and creating new relationships can lead to opportunities for future employment. Capitalize on your child's strengths and special interests and build networks around them. See the list below for suggestions on how to build networks.

- **Reach out to People you Know**
 - Share interests, strengths and skill sets of your child with family, friends, and neighbors.
- **Take Advantage of your Local Community**
 - Take an inventory of the places you frequently visit and consider how your child can add to these environments.
 - Look at the local library, community centre, church, etc.
- **Connect with Organizations and Local Business Owners**
 - Market the skill set of your child.
 - Attend job fairs like [Jake's House Employment Expo](#) an inclusive career fair for individuals with autism and other neurodiverse conditions
- **Connect with a Mentor**
 - [Student Links Mentoring | Community Living Ontario](#) is an opportunity for students (ages 14 to 21) to explore ideas for their future after high school. It matches students and mentors who share a common passion or interest.

4. Developing Soft Skills

The social navigation of a job can be difficult to master and may need to be taught and practiced, in a variety of different environments with different people. Even if an individual is skilled for the job, many of the expectations will center around other traits. It is important to know the difference between the technical skills needed for the job (hard skills) versus the interpersonal skills (soft skills). Your child will need both types of skills to be successfully employed.

Here are some examples of important traits employers look for, and that individuals should start developing well before their transition to the workplace:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ● Motivated (willingness to work) | ● Good hygiene and appearance (e.g., appropriate dress code, cleanliness) |
| ● Dependable | ● Flexible |
| ● Punctual | ● Get along with a variety of people |
| ● Efficient and task oriented | |
| ● Able to follow instructions | |
| ● Positive attitude | |

5. Developing Healthy Routines to Promote Wellbeing and Motivation

Motivation is one of the key traits all employers look for and is essential to help maintain work. Sometimes what appears to be a lack of motivation can actually be the effects of life changes, stress or underlying health conditions.

Although motivation cannot be taught directly, it can be fostered by practicing healthy habits and routines. Healthy routines, if well-established, can support individuals to develop habits which can boost mental health, and motivation.

You can support your child by giving them lots of opportunities to practice following healthy routines. Consider replacing verbal reminders with visual prompts and natural prompts so that they can learn self-responsibility. Healthy routines include:

- Sleep schedule
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Hygiene
- Relaxation
- Socializing
- Organization

Options After High School



To help your child on their path to employment, consider the best fit. Conversations can revolve around the following:

- Does your child want to continue learning?
- Is your child motivated to work and would they benefit from support to find and maintain a job?
- Is your child motivated to work and are they ready to apply for a part-time or full-time job?
- Is your child interested in starting their own business?

These will help clarify the direction to take after high school graduation. There are supports in the community that may help.

Remember it's not a race, it's a journey. There is time after high school to continue to focus on building skills and experiences to prepare for employment.

1. Further Learning Opportunities

Further learning expands skill sets and knowledge. This will help with job retention, and also generate new ideas for jobs. Think about options that align with your child's strengths, interests and goals. For suggestions on further learning ideas see the list below.

- **Take Certificate courses or online courses**

- First aid, CPR [St John Ambulance First Aid Training](#)
- Employment Training Courses like warehouse essential skills, early childhood assistant, digital skills, bicycle assembly and maintenance [Bike repair Learning Enrichment Foundation Training Courses](#)
- Food Handlers Certificate or Customer Care Certificate
- [PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs](#) offers free online programs to upgrade reading, writing, math and computer skills as well as a variety of free certificate courses.
- [Employment Works](#) offers employment preparedness training and support, both in-person and online options.
- [Autism Career Connections- Autism Ontario](#) offers free self-paced online programs for job seekers to learn the skills and tools necessary to apply for work and succeed in interviews.

- **Apply to a traditional college experience**

- [Inclusive Education Programs in Ontario](#) or CICE (Community Integration Through Cooperative Education) offer a two year program where students learn skills needed to be independent in the community and find employment. Requirements include OSSC or OSSD.
- [College Vocational \(A101\)](#) at George Brown College is a one year program with a focus on developing job-readiness skills and career exploration. Requirements include OSSC or OSSD.
- [Community Integration through Co-operative Education \(CICE\) - Humber College](#) is a two-year certificate program designed to give adults with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to experience college life. Requirements include COA or OSSC. Not open to students with an OSSD.
- [I-OPEN Individualized On-Campus Postsecondary Experience Network](#) is run through Community Living in partnership with Centennial College. Participants need to be registered with DSO to apply for I-OPEN.

2. Supported Employment Agencies

If your child is motivated to work and would benefit from a minimal level of support, then they might want to connect with a supported employment agency. These employment agencies specialize in helping people with disabilities or other barriers to employment find a job and keep a job. Some of these agencies also have pre-employment training services for people who need to learn specific skills before starting their job search.

Consider the following questions as you make your decision about which supported employment agency will be the best fit for your child.

- Where is the agency located? Is it easy to get to?
- What types of employment supports are offered? For example, interview preparation, job coaching, ongoing job retention support or pre-employment skills training? Do they fit your child's current needs?
- Is there a fee for the program or is it ministry funded?

A good place to begin your search can include:

- [Ready Willing Able \(RWA\) Employment Agency Partners](#) RWA has a national database of employment agencies who support candidates with an intellectual disability or who are on the autism spectrum. Select Ontario to see a list of agencies in your area.
- [211 Disabilities Employment Programs](#) is an online database to search for employment programs.
- [Ontario Disability Support Program \(ODSP\), Employment Supports](#) your local ODSP office can connect you to service providers in the community who offer a variety of employment supports.
- [JVS Toronto - Disability Employment and Inclusion Programs](#) For information about the variety of programs offered through JVS please call 416-787-1151 or email intake@jvstoronto.org.
- [Corbrook Employment Services](#) offers supportive employment services for people who are ready to work as well as pre-employment training for people who need further skill development. Call 416-245-5655.
- [Jake's House](#) Employment training program for people 16+ with autism or a developmental disability. Register online.
- [Adults Supports and Employment Services – Kerry's Place](#) Offers supportive employment services for people with autism who are ready to work as well as pre-employment training through Employment Works. Call 1-833-775-3779

3. Competitive Employment

If your child is motivated and ready to work, they can apply to jobs using search engines like Indeed. They might consider using an employment agency to help them update their resume or find a job.

- [My Job Match](#) is a platform that connects job seekers who have a disability with job postings from employers based on shared goals, skills and interests.
- [Specialisterne Canada](#) works with businesses to tap into the talents of autistic or neurodivergent jobseekers. Register online to join their talent pool.
- [Get help finding a youth or student job | Ontario.ca](#) list of programs to consider.
- [Youth Employment Services](#) offers youth employment training and counseling.

4. Start your own Business

For those who have a strong talent or ability in a certain area, starting your own business may be an option. This may require support from family and or other networks. The list below offers some starting points to consider.

- Focus on the young adults' passions or special talents.
- Start small, for example showcase the product or service at a small venue.
- [Disability Business Grants: 18 Fantastic Funding Programs for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities](#) may help jump start a business.
- Look for training programs that may help provide skills for starting your own business.

Create a Portfolio

Whether your young adult is looking for job opportunities after high school, transitioning to adult services or exploring further learning opportunities, collecting and saving important documents in a portfolio can help with planning for the future. Consider organizing the portfolio into itemized folders.

Work Related Experience

When looking for employment opportunities, build upon your child's technical skills or special interests. Employers are looking for employees that benefit the company. It is important to market young adults according to their strengths, not their perceived disability. Include documents that display your child's achievements, strengths, experiences.

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

Important Documents

To be eligible for or to access government assistance or work readiness programs, your young adult may be required to provide supporting documentation along with their application. Keep a record of important documents including:

- Psychological reports
- Most recent IEP
- Most recent report cards
- Most recent IPRC form
- Medical information/diagnosis/assessments
- Completed [One-Page Profile](#)

For additional ideas on how to create a portfolio that is best suited to your child, consider using the Journey to Adulthood Portfolio, a downloadable resource to help you create a system to have quick access to important documents. Go to [Transition to Adulthood Resources | Autism Ontario](#) and select Journey to Adulthood Portfolio.

Long Term Planning

For advice regarding power of attorney, RDSP, Henson Trusts, ODSP, or tax credits speak to professionals specializing in planning for people with a disability. 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 and Tools

- [Inspiring Possibilities Estate Planning Guide](#) is an online toolkit from Community Living Ontario with advice from legal, tax and accounting professionals who specialize in supporting people who have a disability.
- [Special Needs Planning Group](#) is an organization made up of parents of people with disabilities who are planners, lawyers and accountants and who specialize in planning for people with disabilities.
- [Partners for Planning](#) (P4P) is an organization committed to supporting and guiding families in building a meaningful, safe, and secure future for a family member with a disability. Consider registering for their e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on resources. All resources are free.

Things to Consider for Long Term Planning

- Apply for a social insurance number.
- Open a bank account and practice money skills.
- Open and contribute to RDSP (Government contributes through matching grants and bonds).
- Apply for a disability tax credit certificate with CRA (form T2201).
- Seek professional advice.

Appendix A: Family Guide Checklist

Consider using this checklist to support individual goals and planning.

What are the next steps for making the switch to adult services? Here are steps involved in transitioning to adult services. This chart can help you understand what comes next in the process. You can check the steps as they are completed. The green colour represents the year in which the step is most likely to be completed.			
Gr10	Gr12	Yr 6/7	DSO Developmental Services Ontario (pg. 3)
			Register for DSO either online or by phone at 16 years, process takes 2 yrs.
			Gather important documents (assessments, IEP, IPRC) for DSO application. The school can provide copies if needed.
			Registered and waiting for a letter of eligibility.
			Received Letter of Eligibility (keep for ODSP application).
			Completed "intake" meeting with DSO. Note: Consider adding your child to all lists (e.g., residential, community programs). Lists are needs based. Give an accurate picture of needs.
			If there are any changes to individual circumstances, call DSO to update. Consider calling annually.
			Contact DSO, 6 months prior to exit, to inform that your child is ready for adult services. There will be a wait (years) for government funded spots. Wait is based on need.
			Investigate fee-for-service programs (DSO While you Wait).
Gr10	Gr12	Yr 6/7	Passport Funding (Reimbursement program, must be registered with DSO) (pg. 4)
			Call DSO at 18 years old to request Passport application.
			Call DSO/Passport if needs change (amount based on need).
Gr10	Gr12	Yr 6/7	ODSP Ontario Disability Support Program (pg. 4)
			Begin ODSP application online, 6 months before 18th birthday.
			Use DSO letter of eligibility (proof of disability) to support ODSP application.
			Applied and waiting to receive ODSP.
			Receiving ODSP monthly income support.
			Consider saving ODSP for future programming post high school.
			Access ODSP employment support. Separate from ODSP income support.

Focus on a Person-Centred Approach (pg. 11) What would help your child feel happy, relaxed and engaged after they graduate? Are they motivated to work? Are they ready to work?	
Strengths/Interests:	Challenges/Barriers:
Shared Vision:	Options After High School: <input type="checkbox"/> Further Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Supported Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Start own Business

Creating Opportunities (pg. 6-10) It is important to develop skills and engage in experiences that will help your child prepare for employment in all environments (home, community and school).	
Choose 1 or 2 areas to focus on developing this year.	Ideas for home, community and school
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Independence: Consider responsibilities, life skills, flexibility, public transportation, self-advocacy and independence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TTC Support Person Card • Travel Training • Ontario Photo Card, driver's license • Bank Account, money management 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gaining Experience: Consider possible school programs, volunteering in community, recreation and leisure, part-time jobs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience • Co-op • T2W Fraser • Project Search • Access2 Card • Special Olympics 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Networks: Consider fostering friendships outside of school and connecting with local communities or programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Links Mentoring 	

<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Soft Skills: Consider important traits employers require (for example time management, personal hygiene, motivation).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Healthy Routines to Promote Wellbeing and Motivation: Consider sleep, nutrition, exercise, hygiene, self-regulation, relaxation, socializing.	

Options After High School (pg. 11-14)

Understanding the options available can help you determine an employment path and plan for next steps to help build skill, prepare for and/or seek employment.

Options after High School	Investigate
<input type="checkbox"/> Further Learning: Desire to expand skill set and knowledge before job search.	Courses and programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate courses • Employment works or Autism Ontario free online course • CICE • George Brown College Vocational Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Supported Employment: Motivated to work and benefit from minimal level of support.	Agencies that help people who need extra support finding a job. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready Willing and Able has a list of employment agency partners to contact
<input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Employment: Motivated and ready to work.	Agencies that help people connect to competitive employment opportunities with businesses in a variety of industries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Job Match • Ministry supports jobs for youth • Youth Employment Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Start your own Business: Motivated to work with a strong ability or talent in an area.	

Create a Portfolio of important documents (pg. 15)

- ☐ Gather important documents. The school can provide copies if needed.
- ☐ Gather documents to highlight any work-related experiences (e.g., reference letters, photos, resume, certificates).

Long Term Planning e.g., RDSP, Tax Credit, Henson Trust, Power of Attorney (pg. 16)

- ☐ Consider seeking professional advice with respect to long-term planning.
- ☐ Consider investigating free planning tools.

**“Build up, build up, prepare the way,
remove every obstruction from my people’s way.”**

Book of Isaiah (57.14)

