

getting students ready for life after school...

Getting students ready for life after school – top tips for schools and services

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The Western Sydney National Disability Coordination Officer Program (WSNDCO) is funded by the Australian Government and works to improve the transition and participation of people with disabilities (including chronic medical conditions and mental health conditions) into post-school education, training and employment. WSNDCO is hosted by the University of Western Sydney Equity and Diversity Unit. There are 31 NDCO regions across Australia. To find an NDCO in your area, go to

www.innovation.gov.au/ndco. You can find out more about the WSNDCO Program and access a large range of information and resources in the areas of education, training and work at www.uws.edu.au/ndco.

The WSNDCO program has developed a series of *Get Ready* resources for young people with disabilities, their parents and carers, and for schools and services. These resources are based on our top ten tips of the key ways that young people with disabilities can be supported to plan for a successful life after school. Our top ten tips are evidence-based and were developed using a multi-stage process which included:

- a detailed review of transition planning literature and research evidence
- a review of relevant legislation, policy, and existing resources
- grouping of tips under ten key message themes
- consultation with experts in the area of further education, training and employment for people with disabilities

There are so many things for young people to think about when getting ready for life after school – What do I want to do? Work? Study at Uni? Study at TAFE or another registered training organisation? Maybe an Apprenticeship or Traineeship? A Transition

to Work Program? Where do I find out about what's involved? Who can help me?

For young people with disabilities there are even more questions - What support might I need? Where can I get it? What are my rights? And importantly, how will all of this fit with the rest of my life? Our NDCO resources can help young people, and those supporting them, to answer these questions.

“There are so many things for young people to think about when getting ready for life after school ...”

A lot of transition planning takes place when students with disabilities are still at school, particularly with regard to planning for further study or work. Young people who plan their transitions well, with help where needed, are likely to have a better outcome than those who don't (Stewart, 2009). While there is a need for future research and transition program evaluations to increase the overall strength of research evidence in this area (Stewart et al., 2010; McDonagh et al., 2006), there is some consensus within literature around best practice principles and guidelines. We have used these to guide our work.

Here are our top tips for schools and services:

1. **Get ready early** – It is very important for young people to start transition planning as early as possible
2. **Get the big picture** – Help young people to identify their goals and interests, and how their disability may affect their future study or work
3. **Get connected** – Make connections with people who can help the transition
4. **Get to know the options** – Support students to research different post-school options and identify what is realistic

5. **Get the skills** – Focus on employability skills your students will need for future study and work – which do they have and how can they develop others?
 6. **Get organised** – It's really important for young people to be organised and manage their time effectively
 7. **Get support** – Provide emotional and practical support and identify other types of support young people may need
 8. **Get them involved** – Help your students gain experience that will be valuable in the future
 9. **Get to know about rights and responsibilities** – Help young people to learn about their rights in education and employment and how they are protected
 10. **Get confident** – Encourage young people to practice standing up for themselves and taking responsibility
- You can find much more detailed information and advice at <http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/get-ready%20NDCO/educators.htm>. You can also download copies of our comprehensive workbooks and guides for young people and parents from www.uws.edu.au/ndco/getreadytoptips. We'd love to hear from you with feedback on any of our resources! ●

References:

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Stewart, D., Freeman, M., Law, M., Healy, H., Burke-Gaffney, J., Forhan, M., Young, N., & Guenther, S. (2010). The transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities: Evidence from the literature. *International Encyclopedia of Rehabilitation*. Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange. Available: <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia/en/article/110/>