



## Career Planning/Community Connections for Students

Did you know that most people find their jobs through family and friend connections? Having a broad network of family and friends who can support you in developing and reaching your goals is important. Friends and family members can help you make decisions, assist you in obtaining needed services, and refer you to others who can help with the career-planning process. For example, your Uncle David just might know an employee at the Department of Public Health who can help you explore your interest in food safety; or your neighbor down the street, who works at the local hospital may be able to assist you in your job search in the medical field. The following are suggestions of things that you can do to expand your social network, receive help with career planning, and practice your advocacy skills. Work with your teacher, counselor, friend or family member to figure out how to follow through with one of these suggestions.

- **Develop a support network.**

Identify family members and friends who can encourage and support you in reaching your goals. There are also state and national advocacy groups you can join to help you become a better self-advocate.

- **Develop mentoring relationships.**

Mentors are people who provide information, support and encouragement. They are individuals who are available to listen to you, answer your questions, and offer suggestions regarding training; employment; college; and independent living. Studies have shown that students who have mentors are more successful in achieving their goals. A trusted teacher, a special aunt or uncle, your high school coach, minister, or supervisor at work are examples of individuals you may want to consider for a mentor.

- **Obtain information on person-centered planning tools that can help you plan for the future.**

There are a variety of person-centered planning tools you can use to help you develop life and career goals. Tools such as MAPS, PATH, and Circles of Support can assist you with identifying the skills, supports and services you need to help you reach your goals. Go on-line and research these resources in more detail. Talk to your parents and teacher about the benefits of conducting a person-centered planning meeting for and with YOU!

- **Take career interest inventories.**

These paper and pencil or computer-generated inventories can help you identify your interests and skills, and match them to various occupations. You can ask your teacher or school counselor for career interest inventories. You might already have taken several career interest inventories as part of your Student Success Plan which all students in grade 6-12 must have.

- **Participate in a variety of real, community-based work experiences.**

While career interest inventories can help you obtain some beginning information about the types of jobs you might be interested in, there is no substitute for on-the-job experience. Job shadowing, informal interviews, situational assessments, part-time jobs, and volunteering can all provide you with the experiences and information you will need to narrow down your career choices.

- **Identify state and local adult service agencies.**

Making the transition from school to adult life involves leaving an educational system that must provide you with a free and appropriate education and entering a system that is based upon eligibility and the availability of resources. Be sure to seek out organizations and agencies that can help you obtain the adult services you may need.

**For more resources on transitioning from school to adult life,  
visit [www.cpacinc.org/hot-topics/transition-to-adult-life](http://www.cpacinc.org/hot-topics/transition-to-adult-life).**

*Adapted from "Stepping Forward: A Self-Advocacy Guide for Middle and High School Students," 2014.*



*Distributed by Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc., 2014*

*[www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org) • 1-800-445-2722*