

Montana Parent's Handbook on Transition: *Adult Living*



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Montana's Parent Center

Montana Parent Handbook on Transition: ADULT LIVING

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table of Contents..... | III |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| Part I: Health Care Transition—Making Decisions about Health Care & Health Insurance | 5 |
| Medicaid, Medicare, and Health Insurance for Adult Children with Disabilities | 5 |
| Understanding Medical Conditions and Appointment Etiquette..... | 6 |
| Finding Health Care Providers | 6 |
| Getting the Most Out of Your Insurance Plan..... | 7 |
| Part II: Money? What Money?—Making Decisions About Financial Management | 8 |
| Inside Common Government Benefits | 8 |
| SSDI Program | 8 |
| SSI Program | 9 |
| How to Apply for Social Security Disability or SSI Benefits | 9 |
| Employment and Social Security or SSI Benefits..... | 9 |
| SSI..... | 10 |
| Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE) | 11 |
| SSDI..... | 11 |
| The Question of Competency: Determining Who Manages Benefits, Wages, and Other Resources.. | 11 |
| Guardianship | 12 |
| Alternatives to Guardianship | 12 |
| In The Long Run: A Legacy of Care..... | 13 |
| Part III: Essentials—Everyday Issues | 14 |
| Common Service and Community Support Systems..... | 14 |
| Developmental Disabilities Program..... | 14 |
| Working Around the Developmental Disabilities Waiting Lists | 14 |
| Lifelong Support Services..... | 16 |
| Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)..... | 16 |
| Support Services for Adults with Mental Disorders | 16 |
| Far-Reaching Ripples: Social Isolation and the Transition to Adult Living..... | 17 |
| Handling Prejudice and Difficult Societal Attitudes | 17 |
| Employment Essentials..... | 18 |
| The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Young Adults in Transition..... | 18 |
| ADA and Employment of People with Disabilities | 19 |
| Applicant and Employer Rights—Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Practices..... | 19 |
| Employment Discrimination | 20 |
| Supported Work Programs..... | 20 |
| Housing..... | 20 |
| Personal Care Aides and Other Support Professionals | 20 |
| Choosing PCAs and Other Support Professionals | 21 |
| The Medicaid Physical Disabilities (PD) Waiver..... | 21 |
| Transportation Choices..... | 21 |
| Public Transportation—Buses, Trains, Subways, and Taxis | 21 |
| Private Transportation—Shuttle Services, Private Paratransit Services, Drivers | 22 |
| Part IV: Stepping Forward..... | 23 |

IV

Glossary of Terms 24
Appendix A – Summary of IDEA 27
Appendix B – Resources..... 28
Montana’s Part C Early Intervention Resources (Infants and Toddlers, Birth to Age 3) 29
Advocacy & Information for All Ages in Montana..... 29
State Resources 30
National Resources..... 31

Introduction

After they leave high school, and whether they head straight into postsecondary education or employment, all young people face a number of choices about their living arrangements, social life, careers, and an unfamiliar array of adult services. For individuals with disabilities, these decisions are complicated by the need to accommodate their disabilities.

As your child prepares to leave school, you will begin entering a different phase in your relationship with your child. You will no longer be the sole decision-maker. Your child will make many decisions alone.

Your child may also be involved in the adult service system, which does not have the set of guarantees that are part of IDEA. For adult services, the client is the person with the disability and not that person's parents. Thus, with adult services and many other aspects of adult-living, parents take a secondary role and are no longer "in the driver's seat." Unlike school services, adult programs may have waiting lists, different entrance requirements, and different methods of operation compared to school services.

To help you understand what the adult-living transition is all about, this guide provides answers to questions that parents and young adults with disabilities frequently ask. Knowing what to expect during the transition to adult life will help you and your teenager adjust as smoothly as possible to the changes that adult living will bring.

Part I: Health Care Transition—Making Decisions about Health Care & Health Insurance

Like managing money, cleaning the house, and working responsibly, managing their own health care is something that teens can learn from their parents and family members. Teens need to learn about their insurance coverage, their individual medical conditions, the importance of basic appointment etiquette, and about basic medical record keeping.

Medicaid, Medicare, and Health Insurance for Adult Children with Disabilities

Medicaid is a health care program for people with low income and limited assets. In Montana, individuals with disabilities who qualify for SSI automatically qualify for Medicaid. Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people 65 or older, and for people who have been getting social security disability benefits for two years. Since children, even those with disabilities, do not get Social Security disability benefits until they turn 18, no child can get Medicare coverage until he or she is 20 years old. The only exception to this rule is for children with chronic renal disease who need a kidney transplant or maintenance dialysis. Children in such a situation can get Medicare if a parent is getting Social Security or has worked enough to be covered by Social Security. For young adults with disabilities who are not eligible for Medicaid or Medicare, obtaining private health insurance can be very difficult, especially for those who take psychotropic medications or who have psychiatric diagnoses. Parents should check their family health insurance policies and determine whether it is possible to continue to cover the adult child with a disability. Some policies will allow a continuation for as long as the child is in school (e.g., college).

It is very important to explore every possible avenue for health insurance before the child turns 18. Basic coverage of catastrophic illness is usually obtainable. Additional coverage can be problematic. If you are struggling to find health insurance for your child, contact the State Commissioner of Insurance at 406-444-2040. For adults with mental retardation, the ARC has a health insurance policy, for more information, call 800-433-5255 or visit <http://www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=429&srcid=217>.

Understanding Medical Conditions and Appointment Etiquette

Introduce your teen to age-appropriate resources and support groups where he or she can find out more about his or her disability and medical conditions. Teach basic advocacy and awareness by reminding your teen to ask the doctor for more information about his or her disability or illness and about what he or she can expect from their body now and in the future. Offer to help find information, and provide clear explanations whenever possible. Describe what a medical history is and why it is important for medical professionals to know your teenager's medical history.

Before you and your son or daughter head for the doctor's office, take some time to show him or her how to plan for appointments by trying the following strategies together:

- Practice calling to request an appointment using role play (be sure to include basic caller etiquette and to mention the reason for the appointment);
- Show your teen how to schedule enough time for appointments and how to record appointments on a calendar (date/time/person/place/reason);
- Teach your teen how to write down any questions or concerns he or she has for the doctor, and how to mention a brief medical history and their current medications; and
- Remind your teen to bring a pen and paper or a tape recorder so he or she can take notes during the appointment if needed.

Finding Health Care Providers

The patient's relationship with his or her health care professionals is an important one and choosing the people who work best with you is a good step toward maintaining your health and having medical support you can trust when you need it.

If you are staying with your current providers, tell each of them that you and your teen are working toward your child taking more responsibility for his or her own health care.

For teens who are switching from a pediatric to an adult practitioner, or young adults who are switching from one adult practitioner to another, there are several options for making the search easier, ask for help from:

- Your local hospital's referral service,
- The national organization associated with your disability or chronic illness,
- Your current health care providers, and
- Other adults with the same disability or illness.

Exploring resources can help you and your teenager find a professional (within your insurance plan requirements) who knows about the chronic illness or disability and will be prepared to provide proper support and to answer your teenager's questions as care progresses.

Remind your son or daughter that regardless of what type of insurance he or she uses, or the type of health care professional you and your teenager are looking for, your son or daughter can interview the person before he or she decides to choose that person as one of his or her providers.

Getting the Most Out of Your Insurance Plan

There are many elements parents have to understand about their family medical insurance policy so you are prepared to follow the guidelines and have the least amount of out of pocket expenses. If you have the ability to choose an insurer, the questions become even more important. These are some things for you and your teenager to consider:

- What type of plan is it?
- What types of co-pays and deductibles am I subject to?
- May I use the types of specialist I need?
- Which hospitals and clinics can I use?
- Which types of medications are covered?
- Are any specific illnesses or conditions excluded?
- Does the policy cover special types of therapy?
- Are there specific treatments that are excluded or limited?
- What are the policy provisions for mental health care and disabilities?
- Does the policy cover assistive technology and durable medical equipment?
- What is the lifetime maximum payment?
- Does the policy cover home nursing care?
- Does the policy cover long-term care facilities?

Teach your son or daughter about their health insurance plan and its characteristics so they will be familiar with the plan requirements and coverage. Besides reading over your policy and investigating its benefits and limits (you may have to do some extra research), there are other things you can do to advocate for your teenager.

First, ask for one insurance case manager and get his or her name and all relevant information. If you can foster a strong relationship with your case manager, you are already a step closer to helping your teen build that relationship and get their medical expenses covered. Update the case manager on your son's or daughter's condition and let them know that you are willing to provide any information necessary to make claims beneficial and timely. Using role play, take time to practice the necessary phone and letter writing skills with your teenager so he or she can eventually update medical information with their case manager on their own.

Second, establish insurance-related advocacy skills by teaching your son or daughter that if they are denied coverage, never to simply take "no" for an answer. Show your teen examples of how to ask to speak to a manager and request that the opinion be sent to them in writing. Teach your teen how to ask for the relevant appeal process information from the insurance company and how to file an appeal, show examples of letters of support from doctors and other professionals and provide examples of how to ask for these letters from health care providers.

As a young adult, your child is learning to become part of the team that determines his or her health care. Ask questions to find out more about what your teenager wants to learn about their own health care. Be straightforward and thoughtful when you talk with health care professionals and insurance providers about your son's or daughter's health care transition. Being considerate of your teen's desire for independence, and having a good attitude, goes a long way toward making health care decisions easier for you and your teenager.

Part II: Money? What Money?—Making Decisions About Financial Management

Inside Common Government Benefits

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Supplemental Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are federal programs that provide financial benefits to adults with disabilities who cannot fully support themselves financially. Individuals who are eligible for SSI are also eligible for medical benefits under Medicaid, and individuals receiving SSDI are eligible for Medicare. SSI benefits are paid to economically disadvantaged people who have a disability or are 65 or older. Children with disabilities under 18 are more likely to qualify for benefits under SSI than for SSDI benefits. People over 18 may receive SSI disability payments as adults, or SSDI payments on a parent's record as an "adult child" (who has been disabled since childhood).

As part of the transition process, your child may need to sign up for SSI for the first time. If your child has a lifelong disability and will need ongoing financial support as an adult, you should apply for SSI just shortly before the child reaches his or her 18th birthday. At the time when you make the child's initial application, he or she cannot have any financial assets beyond the allowable (a house, an automobile, and \$2,000 dollars or less). When your child applies for SSI as an adult, your family income will not be a consideration. He or she will be evaluated for eligibility based on level of disability and personal financial assets.

SSDI Program

The SSDI program is an insurance program that provides coverage for individuals in case they become disabled. In order to receive SSDI payments, individuals must have a continuing disabling condition and be earning less than \$500 dollars per month at the time of application. The funding for SSDI payments comes from tax withholdings from a person's earnings. Therefore, only people who have worked and paid taxes into the social security system are eligible for this program. In some cases, a person with a disability may be entitled to this benefit because of the work history of a deceased or retired parent. In general, however, persons must have worked approximately half of the months since turning twenty-one (21) years of age.

The FICA taxes withheld from their paychecks during these months are "premium" payments toward SSDI insurance coverage. With SSDI, there is no partial or graduating payment. Individuals who are eligible receive either a full payment or none at all. If individuals are deemed no longer disabled, or they have reached the point that they are earning \$500 dollars or more per month, they lose all of their SSDI benefits. Once dropped from SSDI, individuals may keep their Medicare coverage (usually up to 12 months) provided that they pay their own Medicare premium.

SSI Program

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is quite different from SSDI. SSI is a federal income maintenance program that pays monthly stipends to individuals who are elderly or disabled and to blind adults and children. To be eligible for SSI based on a medical condition, a person must:

- Have little or no income or resources, but may have one house, one automobile, and \$2,000 or less cash;
- Be considered medically disabled; and
- Initially not be working, or working but earning less than the substantial gainful activity level (around \$500 dollars per month).

Once on the SSI rolls, work activity does not affect a person's continuing eligibility. Work activity does not affect initial or continuing eligibility for a person who is blind.

How to Apply for Social Security Disability or SSI Benefits

You can apply for Social Security or SSI benefits for your child by calling your local Social Security office and setting up a telephone appointment with a caseworker. You should have the child's Social Security number and birth certificate available when you apply. You also will need to provide records that show your child's income and assets.

In order to prove that your child has a lifelong disability, you will need thorough and detailed medical records. When you file, you will be asked to provide names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all doctors, hospitals, clinics, and other specialists your child sees. Many initial applications for SSI are denied because documentation is incomplete, so be sure to include all the relevant information to support your child's application.

To reach Social Security, you can call toll-free at 1-800-772-1213. You can speak to a representative between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. each business day. The lines are busiest early in the week and early in the month so it is best to call at other times. When you call, have your child's Social Security number handy.

If you have a touch-tone phone, recorded information and services are available on the toll-free line 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call the toll-free TTY number, 1-800-325-0778 between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on business days. Copies of general Social Security publications are available on the internet at <http://www.ssa.gov>. You can also find information and forms for SSDI and SSI online at <http://www.ssa.gov/d&s1.htm>.

Employment and Social Security or SSI Benefits

Even though the government originally provided SSI and SSDI, as support for individuals who would never be able to support themselves, the law was revised in the 1980s to encourage people with disabilities to go to work while retaining part or all of their SSI benefits and remaining eligible for Medicaid or Medicare.

SSI

An individual may work and still receive SSI benefits, but the benefits will be reduced in relationship to the amount of money earned. SSI payments decrease by \$1 dollar for every \$2 dollars earned over \$65 dollars per month. Normally, to be eligible for SSI, an individual cannot accumulate a savings or checking account worth \$2,000 dollars or more. However, there is a way to save money for work-related expenses in a special account. A plan for achieving self-support (known as a PASS Plan) lets an SSI recipient set aside money and/or other property to help him or her reach an employment goal inside a specified time period; for example, a person could set aside money for an education, vocational training, paying for a job coach, or starting a business. To qualify for a PASS plan, the goal must create a job that will produce sufficient earnings to reduce the recipient's dependency on SSI payments. A PASS plan helps acquire needed items, services or skills for an individual to compete for an entry-level job in a professional, business or trade environment.

Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS):

The PASS Plan can help a person establish or maintain SSI eligibility and can also increase the person's SSI payment amount. PASS accounts can be started for a child at any age but generally are not held longer than 48 months. It is also possible to write a PASS for a child 14-18, sheltering parents' income and thereby qualifying the family for SSI.

A PASS Plan must be in writing and approved by Social Security. The plan must include a work goal, how long it will take to reach the goal, and what things the individual will need to reach the goal. In addition, the plan must include the cost of things the individual needs to reach the goal, and how much money he or she will need to set aside each month to pay for them.

Anyone can help set up a PASS Plan, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, an employer, a friend or relative, or the people at the Social Security office. A plan may be changed after it is approved, but the individual must tell the Social Security office what changes were made and the changes must be approved in advance.

To fill out a PASS plan, contact your local Social Security office or download the form online at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ssa-545.html>. For more information on work incentives and the PASS Plan, contact:

Regional Communications Office
 Social Security Administration
 1961 Stout Street, Room 1052
 Denver, Colorado 80294
 1-801-377-5651 ext. 303

Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

Since having a disability results in additional expenses to the worker in order to go to work, the government allows impairment-related expenses to be deducted from earnings. Only after these expenses are deducted is a determination made as to whether earnings are such that the individual's SSI payments will be reduced. In other words, impairment-related work expenses can reduce earnings below the level where SSI (or SSDI) payments must be reduced.

SSDI

SSDI eligibility is determined by whether or not the individual meets the statutory definition of disability:

- Be considered medically disabled, and
- Initially not be working, or working but earning less than the substantial gainful activity level (around \$500 per month).

If recipients of SSDI payments decide to enter or reenter the work force and expect to earn more than \$500 per month, these individuals can test their ability to work during a Trial Work Period when they can continue to receive SSDI benefits and not be declared ineligible.

Trial Work Period:

Many people with disabilities would like to work but are afraid to try because of concern that their benefits might stop. The trial work period lets people test their ability to work or run a business for at least 9 months without affecting their disability benefits. They continue to get full benefits during the trial work period no matter how much they earn.

Each month in which earnings are more than \$200 counts as a month of the trial work period; when the beneficiary has accumulated nine such months (not necessarily consecutively), the trial work period is completed.

After the trial work period, the Social Security Administration reviews the work. Substantial gainful earnings during or after the trial work period normally indicate that the beneficiary is able to work in spite of a disabling impairment:

- if the work is not substantial gainful activity, SSDI benefits continue; or,
- If the work is substantial gainful activity, cash benefits continue for three more months then they stop.

The Question of Competency: Determining Who Manages Benefits, Wages, and Other Resources

If you are concerned about your teenager's ability to manage his or her income and expenses, consider introducing your son or daughter to the basics of budgeting for income and expenses using the introductory resources that are common to local banks or credit unions. Usually, these basic guides teach teens how to write checks, use atm cards for deposits and withdrawals, balance checkbooks, read bank statements, and fill out essential banking forms like deposit and withdrawal slips. If, despite basic awareness of his or her money management needs, you believe your teenager is not comfortable with or capable of managing his or her financial resources, you will need to consider several choices to protect your teen's financial future.

Guardianship

For adult children, the avenues for guardianship are complex. Guardians may only be appointed to meet the actual mental and physical limitations of disabled or incapacitated people. The guardianship must be designed to encourage the development of maximum independence of the person and may be used only to promote and protect the well-being of the person.

In Montana, there are three levels of guardianship: full, limited and conservatorship. Full guardianship carries with it the full rights and responsibilities of parenthood. Limited guardianship allows guardians only those powers and duties specified by the court's order. Conservatorships allow for the management of property or financial benefits on behalf of the incapacitated person.

Only the courts can decide if one person can become the guardian of another adult person and this decision is based on the disabled person's ability to handle essential matters in life including decisions regarding money and property. The courts will defer to psychological testing to analyze the adult child's decision-making skills, and while a parent does not have a final say, an attorney may be hired to assist with the advocacy process.

Some of the most important qualities for a good guardian include holding the same moral and religious beliefs as you and your family and having the ability to handle financial responsibility and make important decisions. You may assist your chosen guardian by preparing documents to help when he or she is required to assume guardianship. Visit with the guardian and make sure that he or she is updated on the life of your adult child, as well as the other members of the household. Finally, do not be scared to reevaluate your decision as many things in the lives of your adult son or daughter and in the life of the potential guardian may change your decision. For more information on guardianship and related issues, or for other legal resources, check out Montana Law Help at <http://www.montanalawhelp.org/MT/index.cfm>.

Alternatives to Guardianship

There are other measures that can be used if guardianship is not the proper route for an adult child. Be sure to discuss these different measures with an attorney to understand the legal aspects of these options. These measures include:

Representative Payees: A representative payee receives and distributes the government benefits received by a disabled person until that person turns eighteen or it is decided that the person will not be able to manage their benefits on their own. This is a good idea when you, or another trustworthy representative (often in the form of an established organization), can help your son or daughter handle their finances.

Joint Property Ownership and Joint Bank Accounts: You can also place property or a bank account into joint ownership if you think that your adult child may not properly maintain or pay for the property. The key is to have a co-owner that is responsible, both financially and morally, so they will not use the property for their own purposes.

In The Long Run: A Legacy of Care

Planning for the economic well-being of a child with special needs is a complex issue for parents. During transition planning, financial issues surface that parents must address with the assistance of a lawyer, accountant or banker. It is helpful for overall planning if parents have made a will. Most financial planners have advised parents to avoid leaving money or assets (e.g., home, car, business) to their children with disabilities. Any legacy that a child might receive would have to be spent completely before that individual would be eligible for certain government benefits. This can be a serious problem, particularly if the individual needs regular or expensive medical treatment.

Currently, the government benefits available to support an individual with disabilities who needs lifelong care include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. Both of these programs are means-tested; that is, eligibility for receiving benefits is determined based on the individual's income and assets as well as disability. SSI and Medicaid are available only to those individuals who have disabilities and have very limited assets (e.g., one house, one car, and \$2,000 or less in cash) in their own names. Generally, these government benefits provide greater support over an individual's lifetime than the typical parent could supply in a legacy. Special needs trusts allow families to set aside funds for a family member with disabilities without fear of rendering that individual ineligible for government benefits that provide long-term support.

While there are many financial vehicles available to individuals who wish to provide for a loved one with disabilities, in the past families with modest financial means have been limited in what they could do financially for a family member needing long-term care and support. Most private trusts require substantial funding in order to make them successful. Families with fewer resources often find that private trusts are beyond what they can manage. Creating a special needs trust is relatively simple, but families do need legal assistance in executing a Transfer Document, which names the trust beneficiary and transfers funds or assets into the trust. Special needs trust accounts are funded through cash payments or bequests.

If you are looking for more information on individual trust accounts, request details from a financial specialist who is familiar with wills and trusts.

Part III: Essentials—Everyday Issues

Common Service and Community Support Systems

Developmental Disabilities Program

In Montana, the only long-term support services for adults are provided through the Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). The DD Program uses the following definition as eligibility criteria for its programs:

“Developmentally disabled” refers to disabilities attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or any other neurologically handicapping condition closely related to mental retardation and requiring treatment similar to that required by mentally retarded individuals. The disability must originate before the person reaches 18, it must continue or be expected to continue indefinitely, and it must constitute a substantial handicap to the individual.

A developmental disabilities case manager or a representative of a DD agency must use a report from a licensed physician or psychologist to establish eligibility under the DD definition. Evaluations from school districts can be used to establish DD eligibility if the evaluation includes an assessment by the school psychologist and has been completed recently. Persons who suffer injuries or acquire illnesses after age 18 are not eligible for services from the Developmental Disabilities Program.

Individuals with physical disabilities, emotional disorders, learning disabilities, or sensory impairments are not eligible for DD adult services, unless they are also mentally retarded. To establish DD eligibility, call the nearest Developmental Disabilities Regional office and ask for assistance. You must fill out a general application for DD services. Your child will then be placed on a waiting list. When your child’s name comes up on the waiting list, you will be notified of a vacancy available anywhere in the state. If you want your child to be in a service close to home, you will probably have to wait longer for service than if you are willing to take the first opening, wherever it may be located. If your child is eligible for Developmental Disabilities services, be sure that he or she is on the waiting list for all the possible services needed. The wait can be a long one (two to five years) so the sooner your child is on the list the better.

If you think that your child may be eligible for services from the Developmental Disabilities Program, the first thing you need to do is to contact a DD Case Manager serving your area. The only way to get your child into DD services for adults is to have a Case Manager determine eligibility and place your child on the appropriate waiting lists for residential and day program services.

Working Around the Developmental Disabilities Waiting Lists

Parents can take some of the future into their own hands and try to create some options for their children instead of waiting for slots in the publicly funded programs. Here are some ideas to consider:

Start your own business

Some parents have been quite successful in creating their own businesses in which their son or daughter with disabilities can participate. Such things as farming, retail sales, small manufacturing, restaurant, bakery, photo processing, or photocopying businesses have worked well.

Pro: The positive aspects of this option are that work is available for the individual with disabilities under the close supervision of tolerant family members and co-workers.

Con: Provisions have to be made to continue the business and the employment of the individual with disabilities when parents are no longer available to supervise the operation. There are also risks in any private enterprise and a start-up business may fail.

Hire a job coach privately

There are individuals with experience in coaching people with disabilities on the job. These job coaches can sometimes be hired privately at an hourly rate to supervise a person with disabilities who is working in the community.

Pro: The advantage to a private job coach is that there is no waiting for a slot to open up. The parent can keep paying the job coach to provide support as long as support is needed. Sometimes individuals with disabilities can earn enough money between wages from the job and SSI or a PASS Account to be able to pay for job coaching on their own.

Con: Private job coaches rarely have professional liability insurance to cover any problems that may arise on the job (e.g., breakage, damage to equipment). Parents might find themselves liable for damages caused by their adult child on the job; also, hiring a private job coach means that parents may have to continue paying for this option as long as it is necessary for the adult child to have job supervision or support.

Purchase housing

Parents have chosen a number of options to create housing opportunities for their adult children. Some parents have purchased houses with apartments. The adult child lives in part of the house and a boarder occupies the apartment. Sometimes the boarder receives a reduced rent in return for providing some level of supervision or assistance for the individual with disabilities. Other parents have banded together and created a private group home occupied by two or more individuals with disabilities living together and supporting each other. Sometimes the parents also pay a supervisor to oversee the private group home. Individuals with disabilities can also purchase their own houses or duplexes and live independently with the support of a personal care attendant or family assistance.

Pro: Providing private housing eliminates waiting, and it allows the family to choose living accommodations in the location they prefer. With private options, the individual with disabilities can decide to live alone or with a roommate or a group of people.

Con: Initial purchase of housing can be expensive. It can be difficult to find individuals to provide long-term supervision if that is needed. Paying for supervision in perpetuity is usually beyond the means of most families. Roommates sometimes turn out to be problematic. With a private housing purchase there has to be ongoing financing for paying taxes and for maintaining the property.

Time-Limited Funding Options

When a young adult is on a waiting list for services from the Developmental Disabilities Program, parents can make use of time-limited services while waiting for an opening in DD services. For example, the individual could receive time-limited services from Vocational Rehabilitation for job assessment, development and training. While on the job, the individual could make use of various employer incentives to help with wage reimbursement.

Pro: The advantage to taking this approach is that the individual is doing something while on the waiting list. The individual is maintaining work-related skills and learning new ones on the job. Getting started on the work process may make the individual a more desirable candidate for adult services because he or she has already had work assessment, training and experience and will require less support from an adult service agency in the future.

Con: The downside of this approach is that when the individual is in time-limited services, he or she will not be seen as being “in crisis.” Others on the waiting list for DD services may receive higher priority for slots because there is greater need for a placement or support services.

Lifelong Support Services

Individuals with physical disabilities like cerebral palsy or head injury—unless they also have mental retardation—are not eligible for adult services from the Developmental Disabilities Program. Individuals with physical disabilities can receive personal assistance services through Medicaid.

Personal assistance services are medically necessary in-home services provided to individuals whose chronic health problems cause them to need assistance in performing activities of daily living. The following are typical personal assistance services:

- Personal Care,
- Meal Preparation,
- Household Tasks, and
- Escort Assistance.

Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)

To qualify for the HCBS Program a recipient must be financially eligible for Medicaid and meet the program’s level of care requirements. The Eligibility Specialist at the County Offices of Human Services determines Medicaid financial eligibility.

The Montana-Wyoming Foundation makes the level of care determination for HCBS. Call with a referral at 1-800-219-7035. For more information about home and community-based services paid for by Medicaid, contact the Senior and Long Term Care Division/Department of Public Health and Human Services at 406-444-4077.

Support Services for Adults with Mental Disorders

There are some publicly supported services for adults with chronic mental illnesses, but these services are somewhat limited. Vocational rehabilitation, for example, provides job training and placement services for adults with mental disorders. Mental health centers provide outpatient treatment and case management for adults with mental illnesses who can live in the community. Supported employment and supported living services are also offered.

Far-Reaching Ripples: Social Isolation and the Transition to Adult Living

Young adults with disabilities report that the most significant barrier in adult living is social isolation. When young people are out on their own for the first time, they quickly discover that making friends and having a social life is critical to their happiness and well-being. When young people are still in school, social interactions take place on a daily basis, sometimes without much effort on the part of the student with a disability. In the adult community, however, young people have to be active in seeking out connections and ways to belong. Their social network might include relatives and family friends, community connections and contacts within public recreation programs. Some strategies for preventing social isolation include:

- Creating a network of social support while in still in school,
- Engaging in favorite hobbies or sports as part of a group,
- Connecting to church or community organizations for fun events, and,
- Volunteering in the community.

Take time to practice making social arrangements, have your teen invite friends to participate in activities like going to the movies or a baseball game. Try to teach the importance of writing “thank you’s” and practice how to RSVP properly (by phone or mail) for parties and events. Encourage social interaction on as many fronts as possible and develop some non-confrontational avenues for your teen if he or she is shy.

Remind teens that time management is as important in their social life as it is in their work life and teach your son or daughter how to write down social events by person, date, time, place, and purpose. Teach your teen how to refuse an invitation politely when he or she is too busy for activities or simply wants some quiet time. Show your son or daughter how to respond kindly when their invitations to others are refused, and how to reschedule appointments to avoid conflicts. No matter how careful people are, sometimes the events and appointments are forgotten in the rush of busy workdays and household duties, or friends’ feelings are hurt accidentally. Be sure your son or daughter learns how to apologize graciously, especially when he or she inevitably argues with friends or forgets a scheduled event or appointment.

Ask your son or daughter what character traits he or she most values in a friend or significant other and help your teen build confidence in identifying these social traits by pointing them out with people that your child encounters in trusted social environments. A good example of this strategy is to use the social traits of favorite relatives as examples for your teen (i.e. Uncle John’s great jokes, Cousin Ann’s kindness to others, Grandma and Grandpa’s politeness and hugs). Ultimately, the goal becomes encouraging diverse social interactions and introductions to people and activities that your son or daughter can invest in at his or her own pace.

Handling Prejudice and Difficult Societal Attitudes

Though public attitudes toward disability have become more accepting in the past twenty years, young people will still encounter prejudice toward people with disabilities. As they grow up, it is important for children and teens to learn how to react when they encounter prejudice and how to cope with their own feelings afterwards. This is a time to teach your son or daughter how to handle the harsh comments, actions, or attitudes they may encounter and to carry on with good humor and self-confidence.

The things other people do or say may hurt your son's or daughter's feelings and can hurt his or her self-esteem. The belief that "sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me" is not an honest approach to the harm that prejudice, bullying, and teasing can cause. There are many specific resources available to help parents and family members foster self-esteem and tolerance for others, but the essentials are:

Teach by example. Your actions as a role model are crucial, if you model prejudice, you will teach prejudice, if you model acceptance and tolerance, you will teach acceptance and tolerance.

Practice grace-under-fire. When your son or daughter faces prejudice, teach him or her to respond gracefully as he or she leaves the situation—teach that unkind comments or actions from others are not improved by more unkind comments or actions from you or your teen. Remind your son or daughter that harsh comments and behaviors do not deserve further comment or response and are best left alone unless they are threats of violence (then you and your teen can report the threat to authorities). Offer gentle non-confrontation replies for your teen to use if they feel it is important to speak out as they exit the situation.

Reinforce love. When you and your teen encounter prejudice or other attitudinal barriers, reinforce your son's or daughter's self-esteem and confidence by praising him or her when your teenager responds appropriately. Ask your son or daughter if he or she understands what happened. Ask how your teen felt about the situation. Did your son or daughter believe what other people said or did? Why or why not? Reinforce tolerance of others and acceptance of self.

Encountering prejudice is never pleasant, but it is a fact for people with disabilities, particularly when those disabilities are visible. Individuals have to come to terms with prejudice and deal with it in ways that are appropriate, natural and comfortable for them. Parents can help their children face prejudice by being up front about its existence and matter-of-fact in dealing directly with prejudice when it occurs.

The one thing that parents should not do is attempt to protect their children from prejudice by keeping them sheltered from encounters with other people. Children learn how to cope with unpleasant remarks or prejudicial treatment by observing how their parents respond to these situations and deal with them effectively. Children with disabilities need to know that having a disability is not a reason to feel ashamed or to accept abuse or denigration. Facing prejudice in constructive ways helps young people to develop skills and feel more personally competent and confident.

Employment Essentials

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Young Adults in Transition

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is in some ways a Bill of Rights for people with disabilities. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, and government functions. Young people with disabilities should learn about the provisions of the ADA and be prepared to use its provisions, if necessary, to secure equal opportunity in their daily lives.

ADA and Employment of People with Disabilities

Title I of ADA prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other aspects of employment.

Under ADA, an individual with a disability is considered a person who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- Has a record of such an impairment; or
- Is regarded as having such impairment.

ADA does not guarantee employment. An individual with a disability must be qualified for the job that he or she seeks. Under ADA, a qualified individual with a disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job in question. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities;
- Job restructuring, modifying work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position;
- Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices;
- Adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, or policies; and,
- Providing qualified readers or interpreters.

An employer is required to make an accommodation to the known disability of a qualified applicant or employee if it would not impose an “undue hardship” on the operation of the employer’s business. Undue hardship is defined as an action requiring significant difficulty or expense when considered in light of factors such as the size of the business, the employer’s financial resources, and the nature and structure of the business’ operation.

An employer is not required to lower quality or production standards to make an accommodation, nor is an employer obligated to provide personal use items such as glasses or hearing aids.

Applicant and Employer Rights—Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Practices

Employers may not ask job applicants about the existence, nature or severity of a disability. Applicants may be asked about their ability to perform specific job functions (e.g., lifting a certain amount of weight, driving a car).

A job offer may be conditioned on the results of a medical examination or inquiry, but only if the examination or inquiry is required for all entering employees in the job.

Medical examinations or inquiries of employees must be job related and consistent with the employer’s business needs.

The one exception to this limitation on medical inquiry is the illegal use of drugs. Illegal drug use is not covered by the ADA. Tests for illegal drugs are not subject to the ADA’s restrictions on medical examinations. Employers may hold illegal drug users and alcoholics to the same performance standards as other employees.

Employment Discrimination

Charges of employment discrimination based on disability may be filed at any field office of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Field offices are located in 50 cities throughout the United States and are listed in most telephone directories under U.S. Government. EEOC’s toll free numbers are 1-800-669-4000 (voice) and 1-800-669-6820 (TTY). Information on all EEOC-enforced laws is available by phone at 800-669-3362 (voice) and 1-800-800-3302 (TTY).

If an individual has been discriminated against based on disability, he or she is entitled to a remedy that will place the individual in the position he or she would have been in if the discrimination had never occurred. The person may be entitled to hiring, promotion, reinstatement, back pay or other remuneration, or reasonable accommodation including reassignment. The individual may also be entitled to damages to compensate for future pecuniary losses, mental anguish and inconvenience. Punitive damages may be available, as well, if an employer acted with malice or reckless indifference. The person may also be entitled to attorney's fees.

For further information about the ADA, call the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at 202-663-4395 or 202-663-4399 (TDD), or go online to learn more at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>.

Supported Work Programs

Another way that some young people move into the world of work and adult living is through programs that provide ongoing support throughout the individual's life. In the past, these ongoing support services have been limited to group homes, sheltered workshops, and work activity centers. Now there are also less segregated, more community-based options for long-term support in employment and in living arrangements. Supported work programs provide training and support for disabled individuals working at regular jobs in the community. A job coach may accompany the individual to the job, teach the individual job tasks, and continue to check back on the individual's progress over an extended period.

Housing

Besides long-term services that deal with employment, there are also programs that provide housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. These housing opportunities range from supported living in apartments to supervised or congregate living in foster care or in adult group homes. Supported living is a residential option that allows a program of supports to be developed around the individual needs of the client. Supported living programs assist individuals living in apartments or houses, sometimes with roommates or sometimes living alone. Assistance in supported living may include help with budgeting and money management; assistance with time management; or with daily living skills like cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry.

As a residential option, parents can purchase houses or condominiums for their children. If the adult child can live without supervision or with minimal supervision provided by the family, this private living arrangement can work well. However, if the individual requires extensive supervision or monitoring, this can be a perpetual expense for the family and may limit the value of a private home purchase.

Personal Care Aides and Other Support Professionals

Choosing PCAs and Other Support Professionals

Much like choosing medical professionals, choosing personal care aides and support professionals is a highly personalized process especially for teenagers and young adults whose lives are broadening and whose responsibilities in the community are growing.

Teach your teen how to research a person's qualifications and background. Show your son or daughter how to request and respond to the information from background checks and references follow-ups. Discuss the important elements that you and your teen value and want to find when hiring PCAs and other assistants. It is especially important for parents to listen to their teenager's requests and to make sure that he or she is involved in the screening and hiring process and can learn how to interview applicants.

Over time, your son or daughter will eventually encounter a point when continuing to work with a certain person is not going to be successful, safe, or prudent. In addition to teaching your teen how to screen applicants and review qualifications, it is also important to teach teenagers how to fire the support professionals who do not meet their needs.

At the crux of all of these points is the crucial evolution of appropriate boundaries between your teen and his or her support professionals. Maintaining a professional relationship is emotionally and financially important because it protects teens (and adults) from vulnerability to fraud and abuse. Demonstrate the nature of professional relationships and give your son or daughter concrete examples of what is and is not professionally appropriate for them or for their assistants. With good screening and positive boundaries, many people with disabilities find and maintain stellar relationships with their PCAs and other assistants and do not experience the devastation of crimes or abuse. Just in case, make sure to reinforce self-advocacy and teach your teenager to report any crimes or abuse by support professionals.

Even with strong advocacy and communication skills, it can be very difficult for people to admit that they are victims of crime or abuse. If you suspect your teen or adult child is a victim of crime or abuse by their PCAs or other support professionals, report your concerns to the appropriate authorities (staffing agency, local law enforcement).

The Medicaid Physical Disabilities (PD) Waiver

The PD Waiver refers to the Medicaid-funded in-home services like personal care assistance and homemaking for people who are eligible for full Medicaid benefits. The term “waiver” is used because two of the usual Medicaid regulations have been waived in order to allow for in-home care that is tailored to meet the individual needs of clients.

There is a waiting list to receive services through the physical disabilities Medicaid Waiver so an individual may be deemed eligible for the services but may have to wait until funding is available to supply the services. To learn more about Montana Medicaid programs visit <http://medicaidprovider.hhs.mt.gov/clientpages/clientindex.shtml>.

Transportation Choices

Transportation can be both a hassle and an empowering opportunity for anyone. When you add that complexity to the necessity of work, classes, medical appointments and busy social lives, the ability to get around town easily is a major goal for most teenagers and adults with disabilities.

In addition to driving on their own (discussed in Transition Guide: High School), there are many other transportation choices that you and your teenager can consider, including public transportation (buses, subways, trains, taxis) and private transportation (shuttle services, door-to-door paratransit buses) as well as paid or volunteer drivers.

Public Transportation—Buses, Trains, Subways, and Taxis

Most cities and towns have some form of public transportation. Large metropolitan areas may provide multiple transit services including trains, subways, buses and taxis while smaller towns may use only a taxi or bus service.

The key to using public transportation is the same for everyone, practice. Schedules, fare rates, routes and access issues can stymie anyone unfamiliar with public transportation systems. To help prevent confusion and to encourage passengers to consider public transportation, many cities gladly distribute route schedules and rate information for a nominal fee, or in most cases for free, throughout the service area (often inside local businesses along the public transit route or at transit stations and depots). This information is the first step when learning the transit schedules,

routes, and fare systems in your community. Use the information to explain the benefits of public transportation and to reinforce basic courtesies like “please” and “thank you” as well as essential safety strategies—listening and looking, choosing route stops and waiting areas that are well lit, using seatbelts and obeying posted signs.

The second step when learning about public transportation is to use each method of transportation that is available to you and your teenager. Together with parental supervision and easily recognized destinations, this “feet wet” strategy allows your teenager to learn the public etiquette of each transit system and helps to bolster confidence by letting him or her manage fares and other elements of the system for themselves. Some good examples include:

- Trying out the local taxi companies to learn their callout and dispatch system and to teach essential taxicab skills like recognizing landmarks and the routes to and from destinations;
- Filling out eligibility forms for public paratransit services and discount fare cards;
- Phoning to schedule with call-ahead public paratransit or taxi services for rides to and from important destinations helps teens learn to plan in advance for these high-demand services (whether public or private programs); and
- Teaching bus, subway, or train skills starts with teaching your teen use a bus or train schedule to plan for the day’s available transportation. Emphasize learning to recognize stops and the important route signs; demonstrate cash fares, tokens, and discount punch cards; show how to recognize the destination stop and, in the case of buses, how to push the chime buttons (or strips) to alert the driver.

Private Transportation—Shuttle Services, Private Paratransit Services, Drivers

The proliferation of private transportation services has created a variety of options for people whose schedules do not work well with public transportation options. The airport and hotel shuttle services were some of the forerunners of this modern tide that has expanded to include shuttle and private paratransit services often hosted by:

- Hospitals and medical clinics;
- Assisted-living communities;
- Churches, synagogues and mosques;
- Community activity centers; and,
- Local charity groups.

When combined, these private shuttle and paratransit services can encompass a variety of transit needs for a low cost.

In areas where private shuttle and paratransit services routes are sparse or unavailable, or when public transportation does not meet their needs, many people with disabilities arrange for private drivers. A few decisions need to be made before hiring private drivers:

- Will the driver be using his or her own vehicle or will the driver be expected to drive your or your teenager’s vehicle?
- Does your son or daughter need assistance from the driver to enter or exit the vehicle?
 - If needed, how is such assistance provided? Will the driver need to be a trained support professional or PCA to provide assistance?
- Will your teenager travel with a PCA or support professional to provide assistance?

After these basic questions are answered, the next step is to begin the essential background checks and to start screening applicants as you and your teenager would for any PCA or support professional.

- Be sure to review all applicants’ driving and car insurance records and to look for patterns of violations, tickets, court judgments, etc.—safety skills and good driving habits need to stand out.
- Consider taking a supervised test drive with the applicants who meet your primary requirements.

Part IV: Stepping Forward

As difficult as it is for teens to make choices about careers, living arrangements, social life and adult services, as a parent you will cope with your fears and doubts as well as concerns for your son's or daughter's success. Transition is an extremely stressful time for families. Look to other families who have gone through these changes and ask the questions you need answers to; because every experience is different, another parent's or teen's expertise may help you and your son or daughter find solutions that may not have been considered.

Learning to relinquish decision-making and allowing your son or daughter a level of adult privacy and autonomy is hard for many parents, and when it encompasses teens with disabilities, the process can be frightening. Teaching your child to recognize decision-making strategies and choices will help your son or daughter build a method for handling a variety of decisions in his or her personal and professional life. Respecting your son or daughter's individual decisions is a gradual process. Your teen or adult child may begin to enforce autonomy as their confidence in their own decision-making skills begins to grow. Putting yourself in your teen's position may help you identify your fears and address them with your son or daughter.

Ultimately, the most valuable resource you and your teenager have is communication. Working through transition requires trust, and as hard as it can be for teens and parents to communicate freely it is especially important during transition to remain open-minded, despite the likelihood of anger, sadness, and frustration. Teach each other to talk about anything and everything that each of you wants to discuss and to respect each other's personal boundaries; you will both learn a lot about each other's personal, political, and societal concepts. Remind your son or daughter that he or she can come to you for help and support and still maintain crucial independence.

Transition is unique in that it is primarily a self-directed task that builds the degree of independence and autonomy we want as individuals. Transition is your teen's opportunity to show you what they have learned from you and to demonstrate the independence, adult skills, lasting personal and professional relationships, and societal contributions that everyone needs.

Glossary of Terms

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—a federal law that seeks to reinforce civil rights and prevent discrimination against people with disabilities; the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.

Developmental Disabilities Program—program of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) designed to provide long-term support services for adults with developmental disabilities. The DD Program uses the following definition as eligibility criteria for its programs:

“Developmentally disabled” refers to disabilities attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or any other neurologically handicapping condition closely related to mental retardation and requiring treatment similar to that required by mentally retarded individuals. The disability must originate before the person reaches 18, it must continue or be expected to continue indefinitely, and it must constitute a substantial handicap to the individual.

Life skills (functional skills)—these skills include the activities of daily living which all adults have to perform in order lead independent lives. Activities may include cooking, washing clothes, mending, house cleaning, personal grooming, budgeting, banking, shopping, driving, using public transportation, making appointments, dealing with agencies, job seeking skills, managing time, daily communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

Medicaid—federal health care program for people with low income and limited assets. In Montana, individuals with disabilities who qualify for SSI automatically qualify for Medicaid.

Medicare—federal health insurance program for people 65 or older and for people who have received social security disability benefits for two years. Since children, even those with disabilities, do not get Social Security disability benefits until they turn 18, no child can get Medicare coverage until he or she is 20 years old. The only exception to this rule is for children with chronic renal disease who need a kidney transplant or maintenance dialysis. Children in such circumstances can receive Medicare if a parent is receiving Social Security or has worked long enough to for coverage from Social Security.

Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)—tool that a person with a disability or blindness uses to set aside income or resources to reach a work goal. A person may have a PASS if he or she receives or is eligible for SSI benefits and has income or resources, other than those needed for living expenses, which can be set aside to pay for items or services needed to reach the work goal.

Money saved under an approved PASS will not count against the resource limit of \$2,000 for an individual or \$3,000 for a couple. A person who sets aside income under a plan may receive a higher SSI benefit than if he or she did not have a plan. A PASS will not increase the SSI benefit if a person already receives the full SSI benefit amount. A person who would not otherwise be eligible for SSI benefits may be able to set aside income and resources under an approved plan to become eligible for SSI benefits. A PASS plan must:

- Be in writing and be approved by Social Security;
- Have a specific work goal which the person can probably reach;
- Say how long it will take for the person to reach the goal;
- Say what income or resources will be set aside and how it will be spent;
- Explain how the income or resources set aside will be kept separate from other money or resources the person has; and
- Describe any goods and services needed to reach the goal and explain why these goods and services are needed.

Representative Payees—a representative payee receives and distributes the government benefits received by a disabled person until that person turns eighteen or it is decided that the person will not be able to manage their benefits on their own.

Social Security Disability (SSDI)—federal insurance program that pays benefits to you and certain family members if you worked long enough and paid Social Security taxes. Your adult child may also qualify for benefits on your earnings record if he or she has a disability that started before age 22. In general, an individual must have worked approximately half of the months since turning twenty-one (21) years of age. With SSDI, there is no partial or graduating payment. Individuals who are eligible receive either a full payment or none at all. SSDI eligibility is determined by whether or not the individual meets the statutory definition of disability:

- Be considered medically disabled, and
- Initially not be working, or working but earning less than the substantial gainful activity level (around \$500 per month).

If individuals are deemed no longer disabled, or they have reached the point that they are earning \$500 or more per month, they lose all of their SSDI benefits. Once dropped from SSDI, individuals may keep their Medicare coverage (usually up to 12 months) provided that they pay their own Medicare premium.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—federal income maintenance program that pays monthly stipends to individuals who are elderly or disabled and to blind adults and children. Once on SSI, work activity does not affect a person's continuing eligibility, though employment income will affect payment amounts. To be eligible for SSI based on a medical condition, a person must:

- Have little or no income or resources, but may have one house, one automobile, and \$2,000 or less cash;
- Be considered medically disabled; and
- Initially not be working or working but earning less than the substantial gainful activity level (around \$500 per month).

Transition—the changes that occur when a student leaves high school and enters the adult community, these changes may involve decisions about further training, college attendance, getting a job, finding a place to live, and becoming a part of the community. For some students, transition involves receiving services from adult social service agencies. Other students make the transition without any particular help from agencies, but with support from family and a network of social acquaintances and friends. Some students will be completely independent after high school, some will need moderate support, and others will need support throughout their lives.

Vocational training—instruction in skills related to specific vocations like graphic arts, auto mechanics, agriculture, etc.

Work study—on-the-job training at work sites which provides the individual with opportunities to apply work skills learned in the classroom. Individuals are generally enrolled in academic classes for part of the day and spend part of the day in the work environment.

Appendix A - Appendix A - Summary of IDEA Services for Children

Please note that your child may be referred for evaluation and qualify for services at any age.

Age: Birth up to age 3 (Part C Services)

Service: Home-based Early Intervention

How to qualify?

If you suspect a disability or delay:

Contact your local early intervention agency (see Appendix B),

(please note that some school districts have preschool screening at this age and will refer to the Early Intervention Agency if needed)

Sign consent for assessment,

Early Intervention agency will conduct assessment, and

Early Intervention agency will determine eligibility based on assessment results.

If your child qualifies for early intervention services:

You and the Early Intervention agency will determine appropriate services within the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan). These services can include, but are not limited to:

Parent and family education/counseling,

Speech/audiology,

Physical/occupational therapy,

Home visits, and

Transportation and related costs.

Six to three months before a child's third birthday, transition to preschool special education services begins.

Age: 3-5 (Part B Services)

Service: School-based preschool Special Education

How to qualify?

If you suspect a disability or delay:

Contact your local school district,

Sign consent for assessment,

School personnel will conduct assessment, and

You and the school personnel will review the assessment results and determine eligibility for preschool special education services within a CST (Child Study Team) meeting.

If the CST determines that your child qualifies for and would benefit from preschool special education services:

You and the school district personnel will convene an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting to:

Design an appropriate special educational program,

Determine placement,

Determine any needed related services,

The IEP will be implemented upon your consent and approval, and

The IEP can be reviewed at any time as your child's needs change.

Before age 6, transition to Kindergarten and First Grade begins.

Age: 6-18 (Part B Services)***Service: School-based Special Education***

How to qualify?

If you suspect a disability or delay:

Contact your local school district,

Sign consent for assessment,

School personnel will conduct assessment, and

You and the school personnel will review the assessment results and determine eligibility for special education services within a CST (Child Study Team) meeting.

If the CST determines that your child qualifies for and would benefit from special education services

You and the school district personnel will convene an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting to:

Develop the IEP

Consent for placement in Special Education

Monitor and review IEP, and

Re-evaluation, when needed.

Transition planning to adulthood may begin at any time, but must begin by age 16.

Graduation!!! Transition to adulthood.

Appendix B - Resources

Montana's Part C Early Intervention Resources (Infants and Toddlers, Birth to Age 3)

Family Support Services Advisory Council —advises and assists the **Developmental Disabilities Program on the implementation of birth through age three (Part C) services statewide.**

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/fssac>.

The following early intervention agencies serve different regions in the state. For a detailed map, visit the Montana Department of Health and Human Services on the web at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/fssac>.

AWARE, Inc., Helena, Missoula

Helena 406-449-3120 Missoula 406-728-3193

1-800-432-6145 • <http://www.aware-inc.org/>

Child Development Center (CDC), Missoula

406-549-6413 • 800-914-4779 • <http://www.childdevcenter.org>

Developmental Educational Assistance Program (DEAP), Miles City

406-234-6034 • 800-228-6034 • <http://www.deapmt.org>

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Billings

406-247-3800

Family Outreach, Helena

406-443-7370 • <http://familyoutreach.org>

Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc., Glasgow

406-228-9431 • 800-659-3673 • <http://hilinehomeprograms.org>

Quality Life Concepts, Inc., Great Falls

406-452-9531 • 800-761-2680 • <http://www.qlc-gtf.org>

Support and Techniques for Empowering People (STEP), Billings

406-248-2055 • 800-820-4180 • <http://www.step-inc.org>

Advocacy & Information for All Ages in Montana

PLUK — Montana's Parent Training and Information Center provides information, training and support to families, individuals and professionals statewide.

406-255-0540 • 800-222-7585 • <http://www.pluk.org>

Disability Rights Montana (formerly MAP) — advocates and attorneys who promote the rights of Montanans with disabilities.

406-449-2344 • 800-245-4743 • <http://www.mtadv.org>

State Resources

Children's Special Health Services

406-444-2596 • 800-762-9891 • <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>

Department of Public Health and Human Services — Senior and Long Term Care Division

406-444-4077

Disability Services Division Programs

406-444-2590 • 877-296-1197 • <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>

Head Start

Services in Montana • <http://www.headstartmt.org>

Home and Community Based Services

800-219-7035 Referrals

Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network

406-549-1028 • 866-750-7101 • <http://www.montanachildcare.com>

Montana Children's Health Insurance Plan

406-444-6971 • 877-543-7669 • <http://www.chip.mt.gov>

Montana Independent Living Services

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/independentlivingservices/index.shtml>

Montana Law Help

<http://www.montanalawhelp.org/MT/index.cfm>

Montana Medicaid Programs

<http://medicaidprovider.hhs.mt.gov/clientpages/clientindex.shtml>.

Montana School for Deaf & Blind Children

406-771-6000 • 800-882-6732 • <http://msdb.mt.gov>

Office of Public Instruction (OPI)

406-444-3095 • 888-231-9393 • <http://www.opi.state.mt.us>

Office of Public Instruction (OPI) — Special Education

888-231-9393 • <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/SpecEd>

Office of Public Instruction (OPI) — Early Assistance Program

406-444-5664 • 888-231-9393 • <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/SpecEd/EAP.html>

Office of Public Instruction (OPI) – Parents Page

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/parents/>

State Commissioner of Insurance

406-444-2040

National Resources

ADA Information

800-514-0301 (voice) • 800-514-0383 (TTY) • www.ada.gov

ARC – Health Insurance Policy

800-433-5255 • <http://www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=429&srcid=217>

Disability Rights Laws

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm>

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EEOC Offices 800-669-4000 (voice) • 800-669-6820 (TTY) • www.eeoc.gov

Information on EEOC Enforcement 800-669-3362 (voice) • 800-800-3302 (TTY)

ADA-Related Information 202-663-4395 • 202-663-4399 (TDD) <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Federal Communications Commission

888-225-5322 (voice) • 888-835-5322 (TTY) • www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro

Job Accommodation Network

800-526-7234 (voice/TTY) • www.jan.wvu.edu

Montana Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities

<http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com/help/mt.htm>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)

<http://www.nichcy.org>

Social Security

800-772-1213 voice • 800-325-0778 (TTY) • Publications <http://www.ssa.gov> • SSI/SSDI Forms <http://www.ssa.gov/d&s1.htm> • Pass Plan <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ssa-545.html> • Regional Communications Office (Denver) 801-377-5651 ext. 303

Regional ADA and IT Technical Assistance Centers

800-949-4232 (voice/TTY) • www.adata.org

U.S. Department of Education – Information for Parents

<http://www.ed.gov/parents>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services IDEA Information

202-245-7468 (voice/TTY) • www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep

U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (ADA Title II and III)

800-514-0301 (voice) • 800-514-0383 (TTY) • www.ada.gov

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Civil Rights (ADA Title II)

888-446-4511 (voice/relay) • www.fta.dot.gov/ada

Montana Parent's Handbook on Transition: *Adult Living*

“The straightforward information with plenty of reassurance and resources is great—loved the section on disability rights laws.” (Parent, Consumer)

“This helps me recognize policies and programs that can help my kids and demonstrates lots of strategies for skill-building.” (Parent)

“I like the updated information and support for parents and teens. Transition and adult issues for young adults with special needs are very confusing and this makes it easier.” (Professional)

The "Montana Parent Handbook on Transition: Adult Living" discusses several topics to help parents of teenagers or young adults with special needs to understand the complex transition to adult living.

This new guide provides resources for parents and family members and includes descriptions and information about common issues, frequently used services, and community supports.

PLUK is a Montana nonprofit dedicated to providing training, information, and support to the 20,000 families in Montana who have a child with a disability or special health care need, and the professionals and educators that serve them:

- **Resources** —Special Needs Library (5,000+ volumes including books, DVD/Video, software, curricula) Accessible and Adapted Computer Lab, a variety of PLUK publications and electronic information via email and the PLUK website (www.pluk.org)
- **Trainings** —Specific topics ranging from disabilities to medical, educational, financial, and human service issues, other training opportunities to learn parenting, communication, and advocacy skills.
- **Support** —Trained Family Support Consultants offer support and assistance with information, conflict resolution, and essential services. Consultants also provide referrals to other professionals and community support groups.

PLUK
516 N 32nd Street
Billings MT 59101

800-222-7585
406-255-0540
406-255-0523 (fax)
www.pluk.org
plukinfo@pluk.org

Rev 4/2008



PLUK services are available throughout Montana and are free to individuals with special needs and their families.