

Distance Learning Activities During COVID-19 to Help Transition-age Youth on an IEP Prepare for Adulthood

With schools closed to slow the spread of COVID-19, families have found their homes transformed into schools. The stay-at-home order supports access to learning experiences for transition-age students that are not typically available to them in their high school classrooms.

However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is not under quarantine. During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams have a unique educational opportunity to create meaningful distance learning activities at home for transition-age students. As your youth's parent, you have an important role in helping them practice and learn new skills to prepare for adulthood.

Focus on your youth's goals for the future

The reason for individualized, transition-focused activities is the same now as before the pandemic: your youth's goals for life after graduation. Read the measurable, post-secondary goals on their current IEP, and then talk with your child about:

- How do your goals reflect your unique strengths and interests?
- What obstacles concern you the most and may make it hard to reach your goals?
- What skills do you want to learn now to help you create the life you want as an adult?
- What experiences would you like to have now to help you better understand different choices you could make about your future?

Work with school staff to find resources

Once you've had this discussion with your youth, ask the school staff or other members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team how your youth can practice skills they need for adulthood to work toward these goals while at home.

With support from the IEP team and resources in your home, your youth can use this time to develop daily routines and learn skills to help them make the transition to adulthood. Transition-focused distance learning activities can help support your youth's decision-making and goal setting skills, prepare them for more independent living by taking on new roles that help the family, and master new technology required for daily life under the rules of social distancing. You may want to contact the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, county case manager, or other community service providers who work with your child and ask for their ideas on meaningful transition-focused activities at home.

Use these questions, followed by activity ideas, to start the conversation:

- What activities could support my youth to **practice time organization and planning**, so they feel a sense of control and gain experience in making choices that lead to concrete accomplishments every day?
 - ◊ Morning meetings to create a daily to-do list that includes schoolwork, personal goals, and home maintenance tasks
 - ◊ Instruction in the use of technology tools and apps for schedules, goal setting, and checklists

- What activities could help my youth **recognize their individual strengths** and find work opportunities in our community?
 - ◊ Identifying the kinds of jobs and workplace settings that appeal to them
 - ◊ Writing a resume
 - ◊ Virtual job shadowing
 - ◊ Informational interviews by video conference or phone
 - ◊ Trial job searches
 - ◊ Scripts for making phone calls to potential employers to get information about job openings
- What activities could teach my youth to **improve their job readiness skills** at home?
 - ◊ Practice job interviews
 - ◊ Time management challenges
 - ◊ Hypothetical on-the-job problem-solving scenarios
 - ◊ A fashion show to practice their skills in putting together outfits suitable for specific job descriptions
- What activities could help my youth **discover their own personal interests** and become excited about different possibilities for study and training after high school?
 - ◊ Virtual tours of colleges and vocational training programs
 - ◊ Interviews with family members about their experiences with on-the-job training and college life
 - ◊ Resources for an online scavenger hunt to find 10 post-secondary education or training programs where my youth could picture themselves after high school
 - ◊ Questions to support a family discussion of what my youth expects to get out of a post-secondary program
- What activities could prepare my youth to **make informed decisions about disclosing their disability** so they can access the specific supports they need to succeed in the workplace, in a vocational training program, or in a college classroom?
 - ◊ Provide them with practice to grow more comfortable talking about their disability and more confident speaking up for themselves
 - ◊ Role play during which they can choose to disclose or not disclose their disability and then talk about their choices
 - ◊ Hypothetical classroom, training, and job scenarios where they practice recognizing and requesting specific accommodations
- What activities could blend opportunities for new responsibilities at home with **practice in independent living skills**?
 - ◊ Cooking family meals
 - ◊ Learning to drive the vacuum cleaner
 - ◊ Painting their bedroom a new color and re-organizing their space
 - ◊ Discovering a new hobby
 - ◊ Managing their bank account online
 - ◊ Instruction in the use of technology tools and apps to help them manage stress and anxiety, take their medications on time, and find bus routes to their favorite places in our community
 - ◊ Caring for the family pet
- What activities could help my youth **gain the technological skills they need** to sustain the relationships that matter to them remotely?
 - ◊ How to safely navigate the social media world of texts, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat

Additional resources to support this conversation:

- “Understanding Measurable Postsecondary Goals in the IEP” (5-minute video): [PACER.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=177](https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=177)
- “APPy Hour: Apps for Time Management” (an archived webinar from PACER’s Simon Technology Center): [PACER.org/livestream/?wksp=BEED6624-A567-451F-B849-E9E718BA3F00](https://www.pacer.org/livestream/?wksp=BEED6624-A567-451F-B849-E9E718BA3F00)
- “Get My Future at Career One Stop” (interactive website): [careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx?frd=true](https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx?frd=true)
- “Start Mapping Your Future at Explore Work” (interactive website): [explore-work.com](https://www.explore-work.com)
- “Preparing for Postsecondary Education: What Families Need to Know” (3-minute video): [PACER.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary](https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary)
- *Help Your Young Adult Learn About Accessing Accommodations After High School*: [PACER.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-18.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-18.pdf)
- *The Path to Independence: Mobile Apps to Support Transition-Age Youth*: [PACER.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-62.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-62.pdf)
- *Safety in the Online Community: A conversation with your 13-year old about Facebook and Instagram*: [PACER.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-27.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/BP-27.pdf)

For helpful information and resources on transition topics, go to PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment at [PACER.org/transition](https://www.pacer.org/transition). Encourage your youth to explore resources for transition-age students and young adults at [PACER.org/students/transition-to-life](https://www.pacer.org/students/transition-to-life).

For additional information and support, contact PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or PACER@PACER.org.