TIP SHEET #17:
VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND TRANSITION SERVICES

The Department of Education (DOE) has created a number of vocational programs for older students. These programs can help reengage youth in their education and enable students to work toward their high school or high school equivalency diploma while gaining valuable work experience. For students with disabilities, transition services (explained below) offer another source of vocational training.

WHAT vocational programs are available through the DOE?

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are located within traditional DOE high schools. Students apply to these programs in 8th or 9th grade as part of the high school application process. The student should indicate the code for the CTE program they are interested in on their list of school choices. Students graduate with a technical endorsement on their high school diploma. Students who pass eligible CTE assessments can also substitute this for a fifth Regents exam in order to meet graduation requirements. For more details, see www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/multiple-pathways/docs/cte-approved-assessments.pdf.

Learning to Work (LTW) is a career education curriculum that supplements academic coursework in some transfer high schools and all Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) throughout the city. LTW provides job preparation to students through paid internships, job skills training, resume development, counseling, job coaching and more. To participate in these programs, students must enroll in any YABC or in one of the transfer schools that offers LTW. Visit www.goingforme.org for more details.

Cooperative Technology High School (Co-op Tech), www.co-optech.org, is a career and technical education program for students 17 and older. Co-op Tech has more than 20 courses including welding, certified nursing assistant, barbering, and web design. The main program is in Manhattan, with smaller programs located throughout the city. Students attend their regular DOE high school or high school equivalency (HSE) program for part of the day and then go to Co-Op Tech for the rest of the day to receive instruction in various trades. To enroll, students should visit the program’s website for an application and speak to their guidance counselor to get the necessary documents. Act quickly because enrollment at Co-op Tech tends to fill up at the beginning of each semester.

WHAT vocational programs are available outside of the DOE?

Job Corps, www.jobcorps.gov, is a free education and vocational program that helps youth aged 16-24 learn about careers, earn a high school or HSE diploma, and develop skills to find and keep a good job. There is a residential site in the Bronx, a day program in Brooklyn, and other locations across New York state, New Jersey, and the surrounding area. Call the Bronx or Brooklyn location for details on how to apply.

There are also numerous private vocational programs, as well as job-training programs housed in non-profit organizations, throughout the five boroughs where young people can be trained in a specific trade. Private programs cost money, so young people should be careful that the program fits their interests and abilities.

TRANSITION PLANS & SERVICES

The DOE must create a transition plan and provide transition services to students with disabilities to help them prepare for life after high school. Advocacy is required on the part of families, school staff and other professionals to ensure that transition plans are meaningful and responsive to students’ individual needs.

WHAT is a transition plan?

A transition plan describes a young person’s long-term goals and outlines what activities they must participate in now for a successful transition to adulthood later. These outcomes are based on the student’s hopes for the
future and should incorporate their needs, strengths, preferences and interests. Students absolutely should be involved in their own transition planning.

**HOW does a student get a transition plan?**

State law requires that every student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) receive a transition plan by the age of 15. Schools should review the student’s transition plan at least every year at the IEP meeting. If the school has not created a transition plan, request one in writing from the Committee on Special Education (CSE), IEP team, or school staff member in charge of special education.

**WHAT are transition services?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines transition services as “a coordinated set of activities” that “facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities.” Post-school activities may include post-secondary education, vocational education, supported or competitive employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation. Transition services should help students work step-by-step toward their adult goals.

Examples of services include supported employment; internships or volunteer opportunities; tutoring; afterschool activities; help applying to college or vocational programs, including applying for financial aid; exploring different types of housing options; and working on activities of daily living, such as getting a driver’s license, learning to use money, or travel training.

**WHO provides transition services?**

School administrators must coordinate and implement students’ transition plans. Many schools and districts have ‘transition linkage coordinators’ who play an important role in this process. The transition plan indicates which party is responsible for each component or goal of the transition plan. Multiple parties may be responsible for implementing a specific goal, including the student, the parent, the school, or an outside agency or service provider. The three largest agencies in NY providing services for young people with disabilities are:

**Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR),** [www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/all/contact.htm](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/all/contact.htm), provides vocational services to prepare individuals with disabilities for employment in a secure job. Young people must apply for ACCES-VR and be found eligible in order to receive services. Students may apply as early as age 14, and schools should help with applications. Applicants must (1) attend a brief orientation; (2) complete an application, which includes copies of recent evaluations; (3) meet with a counselor; and (4) choose a program that meets their interests and goals. The vast majority of students who had IEPs in high school will qualify for services from ACCES-VR.

**New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD),** [www.opwdd.ny.gov](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov), provides a variety of services for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Services may include community habilitation, counseling, respite, supported employment, attendance at day programs, camps, and housing supports. To determine eligibility for OPWDD services, an application and documentation of the person’s disability must be submitted through OPWDD’s “Front Door” process. Contact your local Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO), [www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_contacts/local_contacts](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_contacts/local_contacts), for application information. OPWDD offers services to people of all ages, but families should apply as early as possible.

**Office of Mental Health (OMH)** provides a variety of services, including counseling and supportive housing, to individuals with mental health disabilities. To make a referral, contact the New York State Office of Mental Health at 1-800-597-848. For a list of OMH programs, visit the New York State OMH website, [www.omh.ny.gov](http://www.omh.ny.gov/).

---

This Tip Sheet does not constitute legal advice. It attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of Advocates for Children. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.