Post-school options for people with a disability

Summary

- For the best results, post-school planning should start early and be directed by your child’s goals and aspirations. Options include further study, work and volunteering.
- Students can access a variety of workplace learning activities while they are still at school to help develop experience and a realistic understanding of the world of work.
- You can help make sure your child’s workplace experiences are positive by talking to them about their expectations of work, and how they can best work in a new environment.
- There are a number of government programs that can help with the move from school to the workforce.
- The disability service system changes when your child turns 16 so it is a good idea to start speaking with Centrelink when your child turns 15.

The move from school to adult life presents young people with a disability with a whole new world of opportunities and challenges. Starting the planning process early for your child with a disability will help transition their move into study, employment or other options after they finish secondary school.

Planning for the future after leaving school

As all young people with a disability approach their final years of school, it is a good idea to focus on planning for the future and exploring the various pathways that are available to them.

The key to developing a good plan is to know as much as possible about what options are available post school and to plan towards these as early as possible. Planning will help young people think about the sort of future they want and what it will take to get there.

It helps to:

- be aware of the various opportunities and supports that are available
- have an idea of what your child’s interests and abilities are
- research the options to discover what opportunities are out there and what supports are available
- explore ideas and opportunities with family and friends
- manage the process to make the transition as successful as possible.

The elements of a good plan

The sooner planning begins, the more confident and certain a young person will be about their future. To really maximise your child’s opportunities, it is a good idea to start post-school transition planning no later than Year 10. It is also very important to make sure that you, other family and friends are involved in the planning.

Writing down a plan that expresses your child’s goals and preferences, as well as their needs and aspirations, and identifies post-school options will help bring about a positive future.

Planning should focus on your child being guided by their interests and abilities. It should consider what they want to do in their community, the social networks and relationships they have and how they can be strengthened and extended.

Things to do while still at school

As part of your child’s planning for post-school life, there are a number of things they can do while they are still in school.

VCE, VCAL and VET in schools
For students with a disability intending to go to university in Victoria, it is important to understand that an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is required for competitive entry to all tertiary courses. The ATAR is calculated by the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) from your child’s study scores.

Their options include the following:

- The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is a senior secondary certificate undertaken by students in Years 11 and 12 in Victoria. The VCE provides pathways to further study at university, TAFE and employment.
- The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a senior secondary certificate based on applied learning. The VCAL has been designed to meet the needs of students in Years 11 and 12 who require a senior secondary qualification based on practical experience.
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools programs are designed to expand pathways for senior secondary students and improve post-school choices.

Start talking to your child about their options from Year 10. Is VCE the right way to go or would VCAL be more suitable? These decisions are made before entry into Year 11 (when they are about 16 or 17 years of age).

Generally, students can undertake VET programs as part of their VCE or VCAL. These VET programs include VET in Schools, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and pre-apprenticeships.

For more information about VCE, VET and VCAL, visit the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority website. 

Workplace learning

Students can access a variety of workplace learning activities while they are still at school to help develop a realistic understanding of the world of work. These include:

- addressing employer expectations
- developing employability skills
- exploring possible career options
- activities aimed to increase their self-understanding, maturity, independence and self-confidence.

You can help make sure your child’s workplace experiences are positive by talking to them about their expectations of the world of work, and how they can best work in a new environment before they go on their placement.

Students with a disability should be well prepared for their workplace learning experiences and may need experiences that are well structured. Careful, individualised planning will help students have a positive experience and provide an opportunity for them to explore a range of post-school options.

All students do occupational health and safety activities prior to entering the workplace. Additional activities are provided for young people with a disability to make sure that they can have a safe and worthwhile experience.

Work experience

Students over the age of 14 are able to undertake work experience with an employer. Students are placed with employers to observe and learn about the world of work. Organised by the school, work experience placements are usually for one or two weeks. Going on work experience is a great way to find out what working life is like, learn about industry and meet new people.

For more information visit the Department of Education and Training website.

Structured workplace learning

Structured workplace learning involves students undertaking structured on-the-job training during which they are expected to master a designated set of skills and competencies related to courses accredited by the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority. Students undertaking VET programs as part of either the VCE or VCAL are often expected to complete a certain amount of on-the-job training. During this training, students learn important skills related to their course. VCAL students also have to undertake structured workplace learning as part of their program.

For more information visit the Department of Education and Training website.
School-based support

In Victoria, the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiative provides all students aged 15 years or older in government schools with individual plans and support to explore their post-school options.

MIPs aims to help young people to:

- make a smooth transition from compulsory schooling to further education, training and employment
- develop skills to manage their career
- develop their knowledge, understanding and experience of opportunities in education, training and employment.

Many schools integrate the MIPs planning process with other aspects of planning and wellbeing support, so different schools may have different names for their MIPs planning processes. If you would like to discuss the MIPs planning process, please contact the MIPs or careers coordinator at your school.

For more information visit the Department of Education and Training website.

Study

Many young people pursue tertiary study as a post-school option. Various supports are available to help young people with a disability to access post-secondary education.

Going to university

There are a wide range of courses your child can do at university, and a range of different universities they can study at. You and your child may have already looked into some of these as part of your school-based planning. The best way to determine what course of study you should choose is by looking at all the information available and using this information to decide what is best for you.

To search for courses offered at university, and find out about entry requirements, visit the MyUniversity website.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET courses are recognised at the state and national levels and are offered by TAFE institutes, dual sector institution and private registered training organisations. Most VET courses are developed in consultation with industry. VET qualifications range from certificates to graduate diplomas and cover a wide range of occupations and industries. Some VET courses provide pathways to university.

For more information contact the TAFE and Training Line on 13 18 23 or visit the Victorian Skills Gateway website.

Disability liaison units

Most tertiary institutions – such as universities and TAFE – have links to ‘regional disability liaison units’ and ‘disability coordination officers’ who are able to provide help to students with a disability. They work to implement the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and make sure ‘reasonable adjustments’ clauses are undertaken. Some of the services include counselling, accommodation, scholarships, orientation and financial advice.

Many tertiary institutions employ their own disability liaison officer (DLO), but others are employed regionally and shared across campuses, especially for the TAFE sector. The DLO can assist with:

- talking to students and finding out their needs to make the introduction into study easier
- putting students in touch with other students who have similar support requirements
- information about scholarships and grants
- pre-enrolment advice
- special entry schemes
- application and enrolment advice.

Short courses

If you are not sure whether university or TAFE is an option for your child, you may want to talk to them about doing some short courses. Short courses are a good way of looking into career pathways and often are used as a
stepping stone to further education.

Another option you may want to consider is courses provided through Adult Community Education (ACE). ACE provides less formal learning activities in a friendly and local environment.

Visit the Victorian Skills Gateway for information about short courses.
Visit the Learn Local website for information about ACE courses.

**Employment services**

For many young people, finding employment will be an exciting challenge. Getting a job can bring not just independence and financial security but also a sense of pride and achievement. Young people with a disability looking for work have a range of available supports to call upon.

The Australian Government funds a range of disability employment services to find jobs for people with a disability. The main programs are Job Services Australia and other specialist disability employment services.

**Job Services Australia**

Job Services Australia providers help job seekers to determine their goals, current skills and any additional training or support needed to help get and keep a job. As part of this process, the services will develop a personalised Job Search Plan with your child and will work with them until they find a job.

Job Services Australia can help your child:
- develop their resume
- apply for jobs
- improve their interview skills
- promote their skills to employers
- build their self-confidence.

Visit the Job Services Australia website for more information.

**Disability Employment Services**

Specialist assistance to job seekers with a disability who require ongoing support to find and maintain employment is available through Disability Employment Services (DES).

DES members provide a range of specialist services individually tailored to meet employment needs. Services include:
- help to prepare for work, including training in specific job skills
- job search support, such as resume development, interview skills training and help to look for suitable jobs
- support when first placed into a job, including on the job training and support for co-workers and employers
- ongoing support in a job if needed
- vocational training and other assistance.

Visit the Department of Human Services website for more information about DES.

**Getting started**

If your child is looking for work, they can contact Centrelink Employment Services on 13 28 50 or visit your nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre. At the first meeting with Centrelink, they will determine the level of help your child is eligible to receive and refer them to the employment service that best meets their needs.

Contact Centrelink Employment Services on 13 28 50. To find your nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre, visit the ‘Find us’ section on the Centrelink website.

**Australian Disability Enterprises**

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) are commercial enterprises enabling people with a disability to engage in a wide variety of work tasks such as:
ADE employees enjoy the same working conditions as those in the general workforce.

There are about 600 ADEs around Australia that employ more than 20,000 people with a disability.

For more information visit the ADE website.

**Australian apprentices with a disability**

There are three types of assistance payable to an employer who employs an apprentice with a disability in an Australian Apprenticeship:

- Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS)
- Assistance for Tutorial, Interpreter and Mentor Services
- Workplace Modifications.

Each of the three forms of assistance is intended to help apprentices with a disability reach their full potential as a skilled worker.

Contact Australian Apprenticeships on 1800 639 629 or visit the Australian Apprenticeships website. You can also visit the Department of Education and Training website.

**Community and volunteer work**

Volunteers provide an unpaid but valuable service to the community, and volunteering is an excellent way of experiencing new challenges and learning about the world of work.

There are a variety of organisations that rely on volunteers and it can be a great way to gain new skills and build on work experience.

Young people with a disability may enjoy rewarding careers where volunteer activities are included. Volunteer programs are supported by Centrelink, local governments and numerous community organisations.

Being a volunteer frequently introduces people to networks that can lead to other career opportunities.

More information is available on the Volunteering Australia website and Victoria’s Volunteering Portal.

**Government programs that can help**

There are a number of programs that can help with the move from school to the workforce.

**Futures for Young Adults**

Futures for Young Adults is a Victorian Government program that offers a range of supports to young people with a disability until the end of the year in which the young person turns 21. The program provides support to young people with a disability who need additional support to that available through mainstream and other community, employment or further education programs.

Futures for Young Adults aims to assist young people to:

- develop skills and confidence
- participate in the community
• develop social networks
• participate in purposeful activities
• have their disability support needs met whilst participating in activities.

Funding is individually attached and portable and enables a choice of providers and funding administration arrangements.

Funding may be used to purchase group based programs, for example a day service, or other individually tailored support, up to the funding amount allocated. To be eligible for Futures for Young Adults school leavers must:

• be a permanent resident of Victoria
• be 18 years of age before 31 December in the year they are leaving school
• have been in receipt of support through the Department of Education & Training’s Program for Students with a disability or equivalent in the Catholic and independent sectors in their final year of school
• have a disability as defined under Section 3 of the Disability Act (2006)

and

• require support in addition to that available through further education, employment and other community programs.

Visit the Department of Health & Human Services website for more information.

Ongoing support

Some young people with moderate to high complex support needs may need support beyond the three-year Futures for Young Adults program. Regular reviews are an important part of the program.

For further information about ongoing support, contact the Victorian Department of Health & Human Services Disability Intake and Response Service on 1800 783 783.

Transition to Employment

Transition to Employment is a component of the Futures for Young Adults program and provides tailored support to young people with a disability who want to pursue paid employment but who are not yet ready to move into employment or receive assistance through a Disability Employment Service or Job Services Australia program.

Transition to Employment recognises that some young people require focussed, short-term support to develop the skills and capacity to enter the paid workforce.

Young people who enter Transition to Employment must demonstrate a willingness and commitment to pursue an employment or further education outcome. Indicators might include a person’s Career Action Plan, their transition plan, any previous work experience history or their own documented efforts to seek employment.

Transition to Employment provides tailored, intensive support aimed at achieving economic participation outcomes and a reduced need for disability specific support for community and economic participation in the future. The funding is strictly time-limited and is subject to demonstration of outcomes for individuals.

Changes to who will provide supports to young people with a disability in Victoria

In Victoria the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is currently available in the Barwon Area and will commence providing individualised support and services for people with a disability aged under 65 years in other areas of the state from 1 July 2016.

Information on the NDIS roll out and how to apply for support from the NDIS is available on the NDIS website.

If you are not currently receiving support you can continue to apply for support from existing Victorian Government programs until the NDIS becomes available in your area.

Turning 16 and Centrelink

The disability service system changes when your child turns 16 – they will then be considered an adult in some cases. It is a good idea to start planning for this change when your child turns 15, making an appointment with

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Centrelink to talk about your options.

When your child turns 16, you will no longer receive the Carer Allowance (Child) but you will be able to apply for the Carer Allowance (Adult). The eligibility criteria for the Carer Payment also change when your child turns 16.

You may need to provide copies of birth certificates, your Medicare card, school reports, medical reports, bank statements, income statements, tax file numbers and set up a bank account in your child’s name. Payments cannot be backdated so make another appointment with Centrelink to lodge the completed forms before your child’s 16th birthday.

Your child may be eligible for:

- Disability Support Pension – for people who are unable to work for two years because of illness, injury or disability, or if they are permanently blind.
- Pensioner Education Supplement – helps with the costs of full or part-time study.
- Education Entry Payment – supplements the costs of returning to study.
- Mobility Allowance – helps people with a disability looking for work, paid employment, voluntary work, vocational training and independent living or life skills training who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance.
- Ex Carer Allowance (Child) Health Care Card – helps full-time students with a disability and severe medical condition to access cheaper medicines and some other concessions. The card can be claimed by students who get a Carer Allowance Health Care Card prior to their 16th birthday.

Authorising a nominee

If necessary, you will be able to apply to Centrelink to act on behalf of your child. Family members can also register for online services with Centrelink.

Call Centrelink on 132 717 or visit the Centrelink website for more information.

Who can help with planning

Post-school planning should be inspired and directed by your child’s goals and aspirations, and be guided by people who have knowledge and understanding of your child’s abilities, support needs and preferences.

While still at school, you and your child can ask for advice and assistance, especially in areas such as subject selection, choosing work experience placements and undertaking VET courses.

Advice and assistance can be provided by:

- teachers
- education support staff
- careers advisors
- Student Support Group (SSG) members
- your Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) coordinator.

Specialists such as Centrelink, Disability Employment Services and employment counsellors can also provide advice and guidance.

Where to get help

- Your child’s school principal
- Department of Education and Training (Victorian Government)
- Department of Education and Training (Australian Government)
- Centrelink