FALL 2025

# Pass it On

Information to use and share with families and professionals caring for children with special healthcare and education needs from birth to 26

## NAVIGATING LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL


New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES®
603-271-4525 NHFV.org

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# INSIDE PASS IT ON




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## *About this Edition*

Dear Readers,

As fellow parents and caregivers, many of us know firsthand how challenging — and rewarding — it can be to raise a child with special needs or health challenges.

Every stage of parenting brings its own hurdles, but one of the most significant transitions happens when a child moves from high school into adulthood. For students receiving special education services, this transition can bring both excitement and uncertainty.

In this edition, we focus on this critical phase of life: the transition from high school to what comes next. You'll hear personal stories, including one from a teenager balancing a first job, school, and multiple health diagnoses. These real-life experiences offer insight and inspiration for families on a similar path.

You'll also find a practical guide to transition planning. Additionally, we hear from the YEAH Council, a group of young leaders with disabilities who are helping shape a better future for themselves and others.

By working together, families and schools can build strong, student-centered IEPs that support success in education, employment, and independent living.

Lastly, we're thrilled to announce the launch of the PIC Family Voices Podcast. Episodes will be released bi-monthly on topics including early childhood, healthcare, education, behavioral health and life after high school. Listen on our websites at **picnh.org/podcast**, **nhfv.org/podcasts**, or through Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite listening app.

Whether you're a parent, caregiver, educator, or service provider, we hope the resources in this issue will support and empower you. If you have questions or need guidance, we're here to help.

We're honored to walk this journey with you.

Michelle Lewis,
Executive Director, Parent Information Center (PIC)

Sylvia Pelletier
Director, NH Family Voices (NHFV)

# *Supporting Your Teen's Future: How Vocational Rehabilitation NH Helps Students with Disabilities Prepare for Life After High School*

As a parent or caregiver, you want your teen to feel confident and prepared for life after high school. Whether they're thinking about college, a job, or learning new skills, it can be hard to know where to start, especially if your child has a disability. That's where VR New Hampshire's School Transition Services come in.

These services are designed to help students with disabilities explore their interests, discover their strengths, and take meaningful steps toward employment and independence. The best part? They begin while your child is still in high school.

**What Are School Transition Services?**
School Transition Services are part of the New Hampshire Department of Education's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), a program that supports people with disabilities in preparing for, finding, and keeping meaningful employment. For students, this means early support through Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) — a set of activities that help teens start thinking about their future.

**What Can My Teen Expect from Pre-ETS?**
Pre-ETS focuses on five key areas:

- Job exploration counseling – Helping students learn about different careers
- Work-based learning experiences – Internships, job shadowing, or volunteer work
- Postsecondary education counseling – Exploring college or training programs
- Workplace readiness training – Building social and independent living skills
- Instruction in self-advocacy – Learning how to speak up and make decisions

These services are available to students ages 14–21 and can be provided even if your teen hasn't formally applied for VR services.

**How Are Services Delivered?**
Pre-ETS can be offered in several ways:

- In high school workshops led by Student Transition Specialists
- Through individualized support from a VR Transition Counselor
- In partnership with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)

This flexibility means your teen can receive support in the way that works best for them, whether in a group setting or one-on-one.

**What Happens If My Teen Applies for VR Services?**
If your teen applies for full VR services, they'll work with a counselor to create an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE is designed to align with your teen's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect their growth and changing goals.

**Why Your Role Matters**
As a parent or caregiver, you are a key partner in this process. VR counselors work closely with families to ensure that students stay on track and receive the support they need. Your involvement helps your teen build confidence, develop skills, and take ownership of their future.

**Get Started Today**
To learn more, you are invited to attend a family informational session held every Monday at 6:30 PM via Zoom. Email **STSInfo@doe.nh.gov** to register.

VR New Hampshire
EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS. ENGAGING BUSINESS.

Visit us at: **www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/deputy-commissioner/bureau-vocational-rehabilitation**

# *Jay's Story of Living, Working and Thriving with Disabilities*

*By Emily Woodward*

Jay was born at just 24 and a half weeks gestation. Weighing only 1 pound 5 ounces, his odds of survival were slim at only 25%. He spent three months in neonatal care—first in the NICU, then intermediate care, and finally in a Level 3 nursery. By 3 weeks old, his odds of living had already increased to 75%.

Jay has both fine motor and gross motor delays. He was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and ADHD around age 9, and Crohn's Disease his freshman year of high school. Cerebral Palsy and Crohn's impact his endurance and cause him to be more tired than his peers.

**The Early Years**

Looking back, my family underwent a lot. I was admitted to the hospital and felt like I would be there forever-until his birth.

I've learned more about neonatal than I ever wanted to know! You don't realize it's what is normal for many babies. The neonatal unit was full of babies just like Jay. I didn't realize that there were that many babies born premature. I knew a lot about typical child development with my Early Childhood Education background, but I had to take a crash course in preemie development when Jay was born.

He basically was the size of a beanie baby, just a little taller.

By age 5, Jay had already been diagnosed with a non-verbal learning disability and completed a second year of kindergarten.

**Hitting Milestones and Receiving Diagnoses - Well Worth the Wait**

Jay started his journey with some difficulty and learned through life it's okay to go through hard times.

Jay's developmental milestones came slowly and so did his diagnoses. His first tooth came at 18 months; he walked at 20 months. He was always the oldest in class, but the smallest. Jay participated in early intervention services in the form of speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy and was delayed in meeting most milestones.

Jay rolled over for the first-time at home in front of home-therapy services…we were trying to get him to roll over when suddenly our family cat demonstrated just what to do and then he did, too!

Jay attended preschool at public school and received an IEP at 3 years old.

**Finding Support at School**

Despite years of evident symptoms, it took many years to get diagnoses. Throughout school, Jay's disabilities weren't always visible. Some teachers mistook his quietness and stimming for signs of autism. Jay wasn't shy—he was processing, navigating, enduring. While his motor skills made handwriting, jumping, and even using tools difficult, his mind remained sharp and curious.

At school, Jay's IEP now finally reflects his needs. It took a full year to get accommodations for his cerebral palsy in writing, but persistence paid off. With support from private and school-based therapies—over three hours weekly—he continues to strengthen the skills he needs for both academic and everyday life.

Fine motor-wise, Jay struggled. He couldn't jump, throw or catch a ball, pick up a crayon or put any pressure on the paper or crayon. He continues to struggle with fine-motor but has found accommodations that work for him to be successful.

**Everyone is different, and everyone's needs are as well.**

Jay wants others to understand that disabilities don't always look the same. "The misconception of cerebral palsy, is that everyone's needs are the same."

**Finding a Career that Suits You**

Jay is on track to graduate in 2026, despite missing over 30 school days a year due to medical appointments. In fact, he took the initiative to complete a self-paced career exploration course called "Major Choice," funded by Vocational Rehabilitation. Through it, he learned what work environments might suit his skills and endurance and the results came up with visual merchandising, cake decorating, or working as a librarian.

Growing up, Jay always had an interest in food service and was inspired by shows hosted by Alton Brown such as *Good Eats* and *Cutthroat Kitchen*. He is interested in cooking but knows his limitations. He knows he's not a super-leader, so doesn't feel management would be a good fit. He asks himself things like, "what kind of endurance do I need to have a job in a restaurant? Is this something that I can do as a full-time thing?"

Jay is currently working at a restaurant 10 hours a week on top of going to high school full-time. Jay acknowledges that it's easier on days where he isn't both working and going to school on a given day and just has one of those to go to. He enjoys his job at the restaurant bussing and cleaning up tables and resetting them up. He likes the fact that he is given clear guidance on what is expected of him.

"Balancing work and school is hard, but adding in I have disabilities and health care conditions and how to balance all of that," said Jay.

*~Article written from interview with Jay's mother.*

## *Resources and Recommendations*

***Find Strength in the Struggles***

*Some times you find the strength you didn't even know you had. Yes, things can be hard. Find your people. Find people who understand what you're going through and to confide in. This can be helpful, especially if you don't know what you're maneuvering through.*

***Be the Best Advocate for Your Child***

*Keep pushing for what is right for your family. Jay didn't have the official diagnosis until he was older. Everyone just said "he had some motor stuff." But it effected every aspect of his life, speech, eating, and motor skills. It helped us to know what we were actually facing, a name to what we were working through. All we knew was that motor skills were a problem. It was all muscle related. There were times when he wasn't talking and they thought it was hearing related but he couldn't physically move his muscles in the right way to speak. Things that helped with that were a higher calorie diet to help him gain weight.*

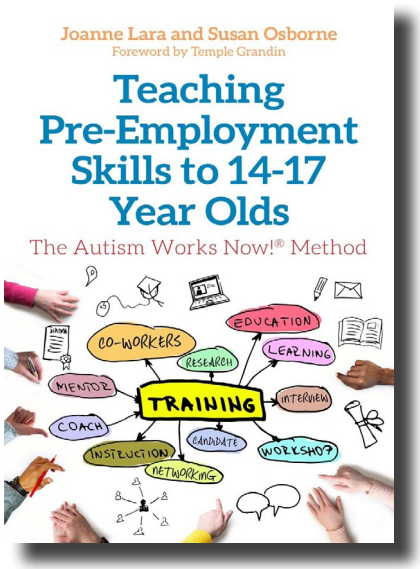
***Find Resources to Benefit Your Child***

*I was researching everything- every book possible on premature babies. I wanted to know everything I could to support him in the ways that I needed to because this was all new to me. I used the New Hampshire Family Voices Lending Library when I got his diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy.*

***Educate All Caregivers in Your Child's Life***

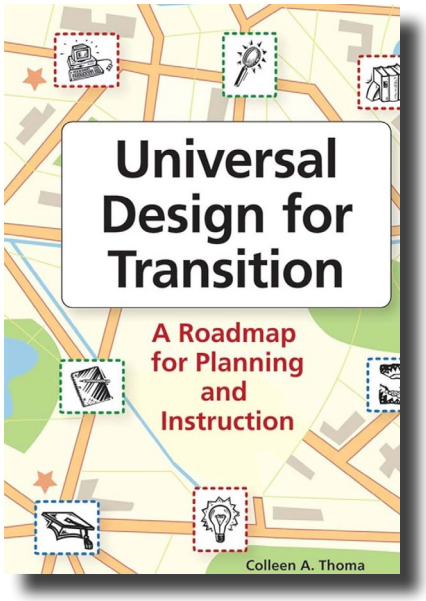
*Knowledge and understanding helped me be calm about everything and I was better able to explain it all to other caregivers. I explained his disability to other people because it doesn't always present itself the same way, and it helps people better understand and support him.*

# New Hampshire FAMILY VOICES® Lending Library



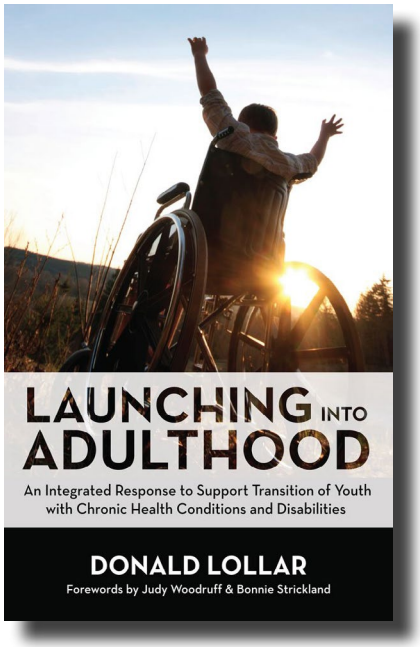

***Teaching Pre-Employment Skills to 14-17-Year-Olds***
**By Joanne Lara & Susan Osborne**

Structured around 2-hour weekly sessions over an eight month period, the program is ideal for teaching to groups of students with autism. It covers essential topics such as organization and time management, interview skills, appropriate workplace attire, and networking. It advises on how to arrange a field trip to local businesses so students can gain experience of being in the workplace. Worksheets and questionnaires help to track progress and discover what types of job will be appropriate based on an individual's skills and interests, and the book also includes a template for creating effective resumes.




***Universal Design for Transition: A Roadmap for Planning and Instruction***
**By Colleen Thoma Ph.D., Christina Bartholomew Ph.D., LaRon Scott Ed.D.**

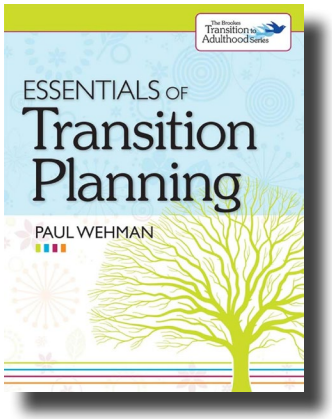
Apply the principles of universal design for learning to transition for students with disabilities with this groundbreaking guidebook. Schools across the country already use universal design for learning to improve all students' access to the general curriculum and tap each learner's individual strengths and now they'll have a practical book that takes this powerful teaching approach one step further for students approaching the transition to adult life.



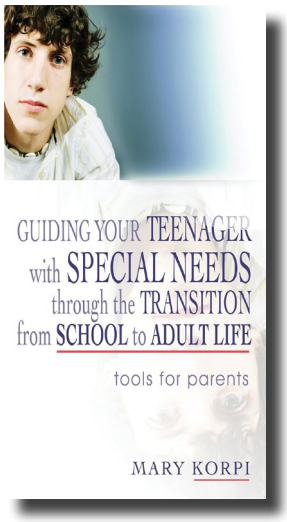

***Launching Into Adulthood: An Integrated Response To Support Transition Of Youth With Chronic Health Conditions and Disabilities***
**By Donald Lollar**

As adolescents with disabilities or chronic health conditions reach adulthood, they face complex challenges related to employment, education, housing, health care, and community participation. Coordinated, well-organized transition services could make all the difference—and this cutting-edge volume gives decision-makers a clear vision to work toward as they reform today's fragmented system.

***Essentials of Transition Planning***
**By Paul Wehman**




For young people with disabilities, crossing the bridge to adulthood will be empowering instead of intimidating—when their support teams know the essentials of effective transition planning. Now all the fundamentals of well-crafted transition plans are collected in one concise quick-guide, straight from one of the top authorities on helping young people live fulfilling adult lives.




***Guiding Your Teenager with Special Needs Through the Transition from School to Adult Life: Tools for Parents***
**By Mary Korpi**

When teenagers with special needs transition from school to adult life, both they and their families are faced with many new decisions and challenges. This book provides advice and information to help families prepare for that transition, and make it happen as smoothly and seamlessly as possible. Mary Korpi recognizes the impact of this changeover period and emphasizes the need for young adults to be included in all decisions and discussions about their future, thereby developing self-advocacy skills. The first part of the book explains how families can adapt everyday routines to develop the young adult's essential life skills. The second part provides information on programs and support services, and stresses the importance of devising an effective transition plan to help teenagers explore avenues suited to their personal goals and abilities. This is invaluable reading for families of teenagers with disabilities who are preparing to move on from school life.

Hi! I'm Sam Collyar, a Resource Specialist at NH Family Voices.

Outside of work, I'm a wife, mom, and pet mom to 3 dogs, a cat, and 21 chickens. I keep busy in my garden and love books. My passion for books really kicked off when my then-eight-year-old was diagnosed with cancer, and we saw just how much hope could hide in the pages of a book. We turned to books for knowledge and stories from others in our shoes a lot, and I'm so excited to be in a position to connect people with books from our FREE Lending Library that could provide that same level of knowledge and comfort.

If you are looking for a specific book or resource on a particular topic, email me at **snc@nhfv.org**!

## *Borrowing from the NHFV Lending Library is Easy and FREE for NH Residents!*

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# *Preparing for College: A Grade by Grade Guide*

*By Maureen Shields*

Transitioning from high school to adulthood can be both exciting and uncertain for students receiving special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and NH Standards offer crucial protections during this time. By working together, families and schools can create Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that emphasize students' strengths and goals in education, employment, and independent living. Knowing what to ask and the things to do during this stage can be overwhelming, here is how to break down the process.

## 9TH GRADE

**Things to KNOW**

- In NH, students at the age of 14 are involved in the discussion and plan for their future after high school, which must include their postsecondary goals, interests, and preferences in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- All high school freshmen are required to take a career interest assessment.
- Students with disabilities can stay in school until age 22. Plan out their accumulated credits according to the age you want them to graduate high school.

**Things to DO**

Get the results of your student's career interest assessment and discuss it. Were the results accurate?

**Things to ASK**

- How can the IEP team use your child's career interest assessment results to inform their course of study?
- What work-based learning opportunities, such as job shadowing, career fairs, CTE summer camps, and career exploration classes, are available at your child's high school?

## 10TH GRADE

**Things to KNOW**

Measurable post-secondary goals are required for students 16+ with IEPs. They don't have to be specific now, so use this time to align student interests with classes and opportunities to refine these goals over the next two years.

**Things to DO**

- Plan a job shadow day! Who do you know that your child can job shadow and learn about their work?
- Work with your child's case manager to apply for PSAT and SAT accommodations well before exams.

**Things to ASK**

- How will measurable post-secondary goals be determined, and what classes and career-connected experiences could be aligned with these goals?
- Is your student on track to accumulate the credits they need to graduate? Ask every year and adjust plans accordingly.
- Ask how your child can be referred for Pre-Employment Transition Services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation NH (VRNH).

## 11TH GRADE

**Things to KNOW**

When your child turns 17, their IEP team will discuss reaching the age of majority, which gives students more rights and responsibilities regarding their special education experience.

**Things to DO**

- Discuss with your child and their team what level of involvement you might have when your child reaches the age of majority.
- If your child is considering college, research colleges and their disability support services.

**Things to ASK**

- Ask your IEP case manager to invite VRNH to be a part of the IEP team if they still need to be included.
- Your child can demonstrate their skills and knowledge in more ways than just grades and tests! What certifications or industry-recognized credentials are offered at their high school that match their interests and future goals?

## 12TH GRADE

**Things to KNOW**

- Is your child still unsure about what they want to do after high school, or are they looking to feel more confident about their path to the future?
- Apprenticeship NH offers high-quality Registered Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in leading industries throughout the state.

**Things to DO**

- Have the IEP team discuss the need for assistance in filing out the FAFSA application to explore financial support for post-secondary education.
- Complete an application for VRNH services before leaving high school.
- Talk with your child about disability disclosure on college and work applications.

**Things to ASK**

- How is the school preparing my child for post-secondary career opportunities, and how are these plans integrated into their IEP this year?
- Should my child be re-evaluated so they have the most recent evaluations before leaving high school and moving on to college or employment?
- Ask your school for a copy of your child's special education Summary of Performance document to use for future education and employment opportunities.

Hopefully these steps will help inform you of the transition requirements in the special education process and provide some guidance on a successful journey to life after high school.

# *Meet the YEAH Council!*
# *(Youth for Education, Advocacy, and Healthcare)*

Youth voice can influence policies and how health and education professionals engage with young people while also empowering other young adults!

Visit **nhfv.org/get-involved/youth-involvement** to learn more about the YEAH Council mission and check out our podcast while you are there.

The YEAH Council is supported by The Parent Information Center and NH Family Voices. If you would like to chat with us, e-mail **yeahcouncil@nhfv.org.**

**Keegan:**
I co-facilitate YEAH Council with Keri Brand. It has been my privilege to be part of YEAH for years and I am excited to be taking on this new leadership role. YEAH Council is open to youth ages 14 to 26 with disabilities and health conditions.

Our group of youth is small but mighty. Each month, we meet to work on advocacy projects, creating podcasts, presentations, and social media posts to communicate to a variety of stakeholders and community members about our needs and experiences. We thought it would be a great idea to each share our experiences in YEAH Council.

The following perspectives are from our current members: Emma, CJ, Declan, and Abby. They detail the importance the connectedness this group brings, as well as highlight the skills gained and projects completed. If you are a youth or know of a youth who would like to participate, please reach out to me at **ksw@nhfv.org**. We are always looking for new members!

**Emma**:
I have been a member of YEAH Council since 2023. The reason I have enjoyed being on YEAH Council is that I gained a connection working with people who have a disability like me. I joined to learn things I will need later in life, like advocating for myself and for different people. I love how you can communicate and connect with other people who are going through all the same challenges. You can learn multiple skills to make your situation better. If you want to have better connections with people who are in the same situations as you, then you should join YEAH Council.

**CJ**:
I joined YEAH Council in November 2019. For the past 6 years, YEAH has been an integral part of my growth. It's taught me valuable transferable skills, and helped me become comfortable with my disability, more importantly, it's fun! Once a month, I get to try new things and talk to people I otherwise never would've met. I've found my favorite role in a conference (panel host) and commiserated about prescriptions (and fixed the problem). Best of all, doing those things helps kids like 2019-me. Put yourself out there, try out YEAH Council—it'll pay off for the both of you.

**Declan**:
I am a pediatric brain cancer survivor and a hard of hearing person. I am proud of both, despite any repercussions. I joined the YEAH Council in June of 2025. While I have not been with the Council long, it has proved to be a great chance to talk about my own experiences and come up with new ways to advocate for each other's needs. Even though no two people have the same medical conditions as anyone else, an outsider's view never hurts!

**Abby**:
I joined YEAH during the summer of 2020. During my time with YEAH, I have participated in several experiences, including a panel discussion at the 2023 NH Community of Practice Transition Conference. I was involved in the PIC/NHFV Hiring Support Staff: Personal Care Assistant and Direct Support Professional Podcast, which taught me how to do a podcast. I facilitated a presentation on medication management earlier this year. There are multiple benefits of being a member of the YEAH Council for me. I have found a community and formed friendships with other council members, which is the first benefit. The second benefit is that I have discovered I want to do disability advocacy or a similar career. The third benefit is that I have been able to have a voice by presenting at different presentations and through the hiring support staff podcast. I have also grown in my meeting minute-taking skills and social skills.

## *Supported Decision Making vs. Guardianship*

*From New Hampshire Family Voices*

In New Hampshire, a person over the age of 18 is legally recognized as an adult, presumed capable of managing their own affairs including financial matters, medical decisions, voting, marriage, and other legal rights. This presumption of capacity remains the same for individuals with disabilities. However, when someone is unable to fully manage these responsibilities, some form of supported decision making may be needed to help them navigate choices while maintaining their independence.

Supported decision making is an alternative to guardianship that allows individuals to use trusted friends, family members, or professionals to help them understand situations and make informed choices without giving up their legal rights. It is an approach that promotes autonomy and self-determination, providing decision-making support without imposing long-term legal restrictions or loss of personal liberty.

By contrast, guardianship is a formal legal process in which a court determines that a person lacks the capacity to make decisions independently. In such cases, a guardian is appointed to make some or all decisions on behalf of the person, known as the "ward." New Hampshire allows for either full or partial (limited) guardianship, depending on the individual's needs. When considering future planning, families should reflect on whether guardianship is truly necessary or if a less restrictive option — such as supported decision making, community support, or technology — could provide sufficient assistance while preserving the individual's rights and independence.

**Resources**

New Hampshire Family Voices Resources

NH Disability Rights Center Tool Kit

# What's the Difference Between Supported Decision-Making and Guardianship?

| Supported Decision Making | Guardianship |
|---|---|
| You have the legal right to make your own decisions. | You lose your legal right to make certain decisions for yourself. |
| You make decisions with the help of people (Supporters) that you trust and choose. | The Guardian makes decisions for you. You are legally identified as their 'ward'. |
| You choose your Supporter or Supporters. | The court chooses your Guardian for you. |
| If you disagree with the advice of your Supporter, you don't have to follow it. You make your own decision. | You must do what your Guardian decides even if you disagree with their decision. Only the court can change a Guardian's decision. |
| You can change or end your supported decision-making agreement at any time. | Only the court can change a Guardianship order. |
| With the help of your Supporters, you develop the skills to more easily make your own decisions. | Your Guardian is not required to help you gain skills to make decisions yourself. |

# *Navigating College with a Disability: What Students Need to Know*

*By Granite Edvance - 2024 Edition*

Making the leap from high school to college is a major milestone. For students with disabilities, this transition brings unique challenges — but also new rights, opportunities, and support systems. That's where *Accessibility Insider: A Comprehensive Guide to College for Students with Disabilities (2023–2024)* comes in. Published by Granite Edvance, this resource provides critical insight into understanding a students rights, accessing accommodations, and self-advocacy.

**From High School to College: What's Different?**

In high school, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governs special education and provides support through IEPs. However, college operates under different laws — specifically, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**This shift means:**

- Colleges are not required to provide the same accommodations you had in high school.
- Students must self-identify and request accommodations.
- Support is available, but it's the student's responsibility to ask for it.

**Understanding Your Rights and Accommodations**

Once enrolled in a college or university, students with disabilities can access **reasonable accommodations** through the institution's Accessibility or Disability Services office. These accommodations are designed to remove barriers to access, not to guarantee success or alter academic standards.

**Examples of Reasonable Accommodations:**

- Extra time on tests or assignments
- Note-taking assistance or lecture recordings
- Alternate format textbooks (Braille, large print, digital)
- Sign language interpreters
- Priority course registration
- Physically accessible classrooms and housing

**It's important to note that accommodations:**

- Will not be automatic — students must apply for them.
- Must be supported by documentation, such as medical or psychological evaluations.
- Can differ from high school supports, depending on the students needs and the institution's policies.

Temporary accommodations may also be available for students with short-term conditions like injuries or illnesses.

**Getting Started**

Asking questions about accessibility can help a student understand how the college will handle their needs. Each school is going to address a student's disability in its own way.

**Here are some suggestions:**

- Explore different types of colleges and what accommodations they offer.
- Visit campuses and speak directly with Accessibility Services staff.
- Ask questions about how accommodations are implemented in classes, housing, and extracurricular activities.
- Decide whether to disclose disability during the college application process (this is optional but may provide context and open doors to support).

Once accepted, connect with the school's accessibility office as early as possible to start the accommodations process.

**Self-Advocacy: A Critical Skill**

In college, there's no case manager making sure a students' accommodations are being used. That means they need to become their own advocate — Students need to know their needs, understanding their rights, and speak up when things aren't working.

**How to Advocate for Yourself:**

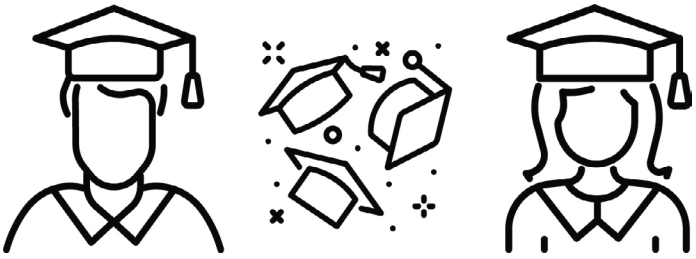
- Learn how your disability affects your learning and daily life.
- Be familiar with the types of accommodations that support you best.
- Communicate clearly with professors and staff.
- Don't be afraid to follow up or request adjustments if something isn't effective.

Many colleges offer workshops, peer mentors, and other resources to help students build these advocacy skills.

**Beyond Accommodations: Other Support Services**

Colleges offer a wide range of services to all students, which can be especially helpful to those with disabilities:

- Academic resource centers and tutoring
- Mental health and counseling services
- Student health services
- Career services and internship programs
- Technology support (software, assistive tools)
- Accessible housing and transportation



**Final Thoughts**

College can be a rewarding experience — academically, personally, and professionally. For students with disabilities, the path may require more preparation and assertiveness, but support is available. Knowing your rights, understanding the process, and advocating for yourself will help you take full advantage of your college years.

**Resources**

**Granite Edvance**: Free college and career planning services in New Hampshire
(603) 225-6612 **www.graniteedvance.org**

**U.S. Department of Education**: Office for Civil Rights
**www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/ocr**

**AHEAD**:– Association on Higher Education and Disability
(704) 947-7779 **www.ahead.org**

# *Healthcare Skills You Need as an Adult*

*By Keri Brand*

When we think about youth transitioning to adulthood, often what springs to mind are things like getting a job, learning how to grocery shop and cook; maybe living on one's own. The skills needed to manage one's health care might not loom large on the radar, but they are equally as important, especially for our kids who have health conditions or disabilities. Being able to manage medications, navigate health insurance, and advocate for oneself in medical settings is important for living a healthy life.

Health care related skills, like other skills, take time to develop and require plenty of practice, so it is best to try to consider building them early. All that it requires is an awareness of the need for teaching these skills, some patience, and an eye for opportunity on the part of the parent or guardian. One approach that exists is called "I do, we do, you do." This approach has been really helpful to me in working with my own kids on building health care skills.

"I do" refers to something the parent might be doing for the youth, such as filling their pill box at the beginning of the week or telling the doctor about the youth's medical concerns. A family member or guardian can start by calling the youth's attention to what they are doing on the youth's behalf and having them listen or watch. "We do" is where the parent and youth work together to complete the task or execute the skill. Maybe the youth can count out the pills, or tell the doctor some of the information about what they are experiencing. When the youth is ready, it is time for the "You do" part - the youth does the task as independently as they are able to. For each youth, what they will be able to do at any given time will vary. The important part is making sure that the youth is able to take on as much responsibility as possible.

Another technique to use is for the parent or guardian to catch themselves doing something, such as filling out forms at the doctor's office, and then finding a way to involve the kids. In this case, they might have their child write in their name and birth-date. It might seem like a small thing, but it introduces the concept of completing medical forms. If the form is digital, the child might help with taking photos of the front and back of the insurance card for uploading. From there, the parent or guardian can show what other information goes on the form. It's all about finding ways for the youth to participate in their own health care whenever there is an opportunity.

Below, are a list of the skills needed to successfully manage health care as an adult. Everyone's path is different, and youth will develop skills at their own pace and achieve varying degrees of independence. Start with just one thing that you can help your child learn how to do, and build from there. It is very satisfying to watch youth develop confidence and competence.

Youth are considered to legally be adults at age 18. Please see the article on supported decision making and guardianship on page 11 for tips on how to best support youth who are not ready or able to be independent with their health care at age 18.

**Key Healthcare Skills**

- Be able to advocate for yourself
- Familiarize yourself to your provider's patient portals
- Make and keep track of medical appointments
- Describe your health condition(s), history and care
- Complete medical forms
- Take the lead, with caregivers help, in appointments
- Plan and practice your questions for appointments
- Know the names of your medications, their purpose and potential side effects
- Know what to do if you miss a dose
- Know how your pharmacy works
- Create a plan in case of an emergency
- Carry your insurance card
- Be able to call your insurance company and troubleshoot issues
- Make medical decisions as much as you are able
- Ask for health related accommodations you need at work.

Keri Brand is a Resource and Program Support Specialist at NHFV and a mom of two kids. She has an M.Ed in Science Education from Temple University and enjoys spending time in nature whenever she can.

# *Healthcare Transition Made Easier*

*By Keri Brand*

One of the most challenging parts of making the transition to adulthood is understanding which benefits and services to apply for, when and how to apply. If possible, start thinking about these around age 17 to allow plenty of time to research and to apply. For questions or with help navigating these, call New Hampshire Family Voices at 603-271-4525.

**Medicaid**: Adult Medicaid does not automatically begin when Children's Medicaid ends at age 19.

**Granite Advantage**: Medicaid for low-income adults, this program is for ages 19-64. Also referred to as Expanded Medicaid.

**MEAD**: **Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities**: This program is for ages 18-64 who are working and have higher income and resource limits.

**APTD**: **Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled**: For ages 18-64. APTD is based on income, resources, and medical necessity. It is both a cash benefit and a pathway to Medicaid. There must be proof you have applied for all other benefits that are offered to adults in NH, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) If you are eligible for APTD, you qualify for Medicaid. It can take some time to be approved for APTD, so starting the process at age 18 ensures there isn't a gap in coverage when Children's Medicaid ends at age 19.

**Aid to the Needy Blind**: It is a supplemental income program and a pathway to Medicaid. Eligibility depends on income, resources and living arrangement.

**More information about all of these programs here**.

**Other sources of Health Insurance**: Youth can remain on parents' or guardians' private insurance until the age of 26, receive insurance through their employer, or apply for insurance through the NH **Marketplace**.

**Waivers:** The Choices for Independence and Developmental Disabilities Waivers are Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers that are funded by Medicaid. The waivers provide support for those with chronic illness or disabilities so that they can remain at home and in the community. This support is additional to what is available through Medicaid alone.
**In NH there are three HCBC adult waivers**:
**Developmental Disabilities (DD)**
**Acquired Brain Disorders (ABD)**
**Choices for Independence (CFI)**

**Learn about the waivers and disability services**.

**Social Security:** These programs provide cash payments to those who have limited income and resources and who are 65 years of age or older, blind, or disabled.

**SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)** For those who have a disability and a work history. SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is for those who do not have a work history. SSDI has no specific requirements in terms of having worked enough years and paid Social Security taxes while working. Check with the Social Security Administration when deciding. It is possible to receive both benefits at the same time.

**NH ABLE Accounts** and **ABLE National Resource Center:** Valuable tools for youth planning to apply for these benefits. These are savings and investment accounts that allow a youth to save for disability-related expenses without jeopardizing their benefits.

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