

Welcome to the Transition Roadmap to Meaningful Employment!

In the roadmap you'll find:

- Goals and action steps to help guide your transition to working as an adult
- Links to extra resources for more information
- Words to Know. These are terms that you may hear often when learning about employment. If you click on one of these words, you'll see its definition. There's also a complete glossary of all the terms at the end of the Roadmap.

Some support

means that support is not needed for most activities.

Moderate support

means daily support is needed for some but not all activities.

Intensive support

means that hourly support is needed for most activities.

Some Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

Be Active in Your Community



Action step 1.

Explore interests through community programs.

Being active in the community helps you build skills you need when you start to work. Participating in community programs can help you meet people and make friends and other [social connections](#). Exploring your likes, dislikes and interests through community activities can help you think about what kind of job you may want in the future.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about community-based skills assessment](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find community activities near you](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find after-school activities near you](#)

Words to know

[social connections](#)

Action step 2.

Plan for supports before, during and after activities.

Trying new things can be overwhelming, even when they're fun. Planning for what happens before, during and after an activity can make it easier to participate. [Supports](#) that work now may work for you later in the workplace. For example:

- Packing a bag the night before
- Taking a quiet activity that you can have for downtime during the day
- Having a healthy snack ready for when you get home

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about being active in your community](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about recreational activities](#)

Words to know

supports





Action step 3.

Be a responsible participant.

The right supports can help you get the most out of community activities. For example, parents, teachers and other adults can help with things like:

- Filling out paperwork
- Planning transportation
- Keeping track of deadlines

And you can:

- Remember to take supplies.
- Communicate with your coaches, teachers and counselors.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about developing employment skills](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about what makes a strong autism-friendly youth organization](#)

Action step 4.

Build responsibility at home.

Doing chores and helping out at home can help you:

- Learn responsibility. This means being trusted to do a chore or job.
- Build confidence. This means believing that you can do something.
- Develop organization and planning skills that you can transfer to a job setting in the future.

You may need supports to help you manage your chores to get them done right and on time.

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks Transition Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about developing independence](#)





Action step 5.

Develop social communication and self-advocacy skills.

Social communication can be the most challenging part of employment for autistic people. Some schools and therapy programs use **role play** to work on interviewing and **social skills**. Connecting with the autism community and **peer mentors** can help you understand your needs and learn about **self-advocacy**.

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks Advocacy Tool Kit](#)
- [From the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(AIDD\) on self-advocacy](#)

Words to know

peer mentor

role play

self-advocacy

social communication

social skills

Some Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 1:

Set Employment Goals



Action step 1.

Think about jobs and careers related to interests and skills.

As a teen, you can be active in the earliest discussions about future employment. Start with talking about your:

- Interests, including places and activities you like
- Skills and what you're good at
- Sensory preferences
- Social preferences

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about where to find employment supports](#)

Words to know

sensory preferences

social preferences

Action step 2.

Include employment assessments and goals in the IEP transition plan.

Employment assessment is part of IEP transition planning that begins sometime between ages 14 and 16. Timing of planning depends on state law. You and your parents participate in transition planning meetings with the IEP team and help set employment goals. For many students, a job skills assessment is a first step in the transition process.

Resources

- [From Understood about transition and IEPs](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about transition services and planning](#)

Words to know

employment assessment

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning

job skills assessment



Some Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 2:

Begin to Manage Money



Action step 1.

Use cash and credit responsibly.

Learning how to manage money takes time and practice. This includes learning how and when to use:

- Cash
- A debit card. This kind of card takes money directly out of a bank account.
- A credit card. This kind of card lets you borrow money to pay for something and then you pay the money back later.

You can start by making small purchases and learning to track your spending.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial planning](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about being safe with money](#)
- [From the Federal Trade Commission about various financial topics](#)

Action step 2.

Learn good spending, budgeting and saving habits.

Tracking what you buy is a good way to learn how much money it takes to pay for things. With an allowance or money you get for doing chores at home, you can:

- Learn to make a weekly budget.
- Plan for what you need to buy.
- Think about how to save for more expensive things, like clothes, a cell phone or a gaming system.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial resources](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about handling money](#)





Action step 3.

Start planning for Supplemental Security Income.

When you turn 18 you apply for [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#). SSI is money for people with disabilities who have limited income. You have to apply for SSI at age 18, even if you already had it when you were younger. It can take a long time to apply. So get started early, well before you turn 18.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about SSI and other financial aid](#)
- [From Social Security about SSI](#)
- [From benefits.gov about SSI](#)

Words to know

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Some Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

Get Work Experience



Action step 1.

Identify adult employment services and supports.

Because of the [Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act](#), employment services like [vocational rehabilitation](#) and [Ticket to Work](#) are available to help students get ready for employment. Each state has its own rules for these programs. If you don't get these services, using supports can help you get ready to work. For example, you may want to:

- Visit the jobsite before you start working to see what it's like.
- Make a script to help you ask for an [accommodation](#), like using headphones.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about preparing for employment](#)
- [From the Council State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation about state services](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on WIOA](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy on services for autism](#)
- [From the U.S. Social Security Administration on Ticket to Work](#)

Words to know

accommodation

supports

Ticket to Work

vocational rehabilitation

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Action step 2.

Explore career interests through work experience.

You can explore interests and future jobs and careers through:

- [Internships](#)
- [Job shadowing](#)
- Part-time work
- Volunteer work

These activities can help you develop useful job skills, like:

- Following a schedule
- Interviewing
- Teamwork

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about finding a job](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Center, Inc. about summer work experience](#)

Words to know

internship

job shadowing





Action step 3.

Develop executive functioning skills.

Executive functioning skills include things like **time management** and **problem-solving**. These skills can be challenging for autistic people. Your **IEP** should include **organizational tools**, like checklists and planners, to help you develop these skills. And you may learn about them in certain high school classes.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning skills](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit about teens and executive functioning](#)

Words to know

executive functioning skills

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

organizational skills

problem-solving

time management

Action step 4.

Practice social communication and self-advocacy skills.

Transfer [social communication](#) and [self-advocacy](#) skills you learned in school to community activities. Practice what you learned about [advocating](#) for your needs. For example, you can share your [social](#) and [sensory preferences](#) with your [support team](#).

Resources

- [From the Administration for Community Living about employment](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about self-advocacy](#)

Words to know

advocating

self-advocacy

sensory preferences

social communication skills

social preferences

support team



Some Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

Plan for Work



Action step 1.

Plan for transportation.

Practice taking your usual run to work. This can help you figure out things like timing, traffic and safety. For example:

- If you drive, you may need help figuring out the best route.
- If you walk, you need to be safe on dangerous roads.
- If you ride a in a bus, van or train, you may want someone to go with you until you feel OK to go on your own.

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks about transportation resources near you](#)
- [From the CDC about public transportation](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Transportation about public transportation](#)

Action step 2.

Think about disclosure and accommodations.

For people with disabilities, getting ready to work means deciding about [disclosure](#). This means telling your employer and coworkers about your disability. Disclosure is your choice:

- You don't have to disclose your disability when you're interviewing.
- After you're hired, you decide if you want to disclose, how much to disclose and who you disclose to.

If you decide to disclose, you can ask for [accommodations](#) to meet your needs. The law says that employers have to meet [reasonable accommodations](#) for people with disabilities.

Resources

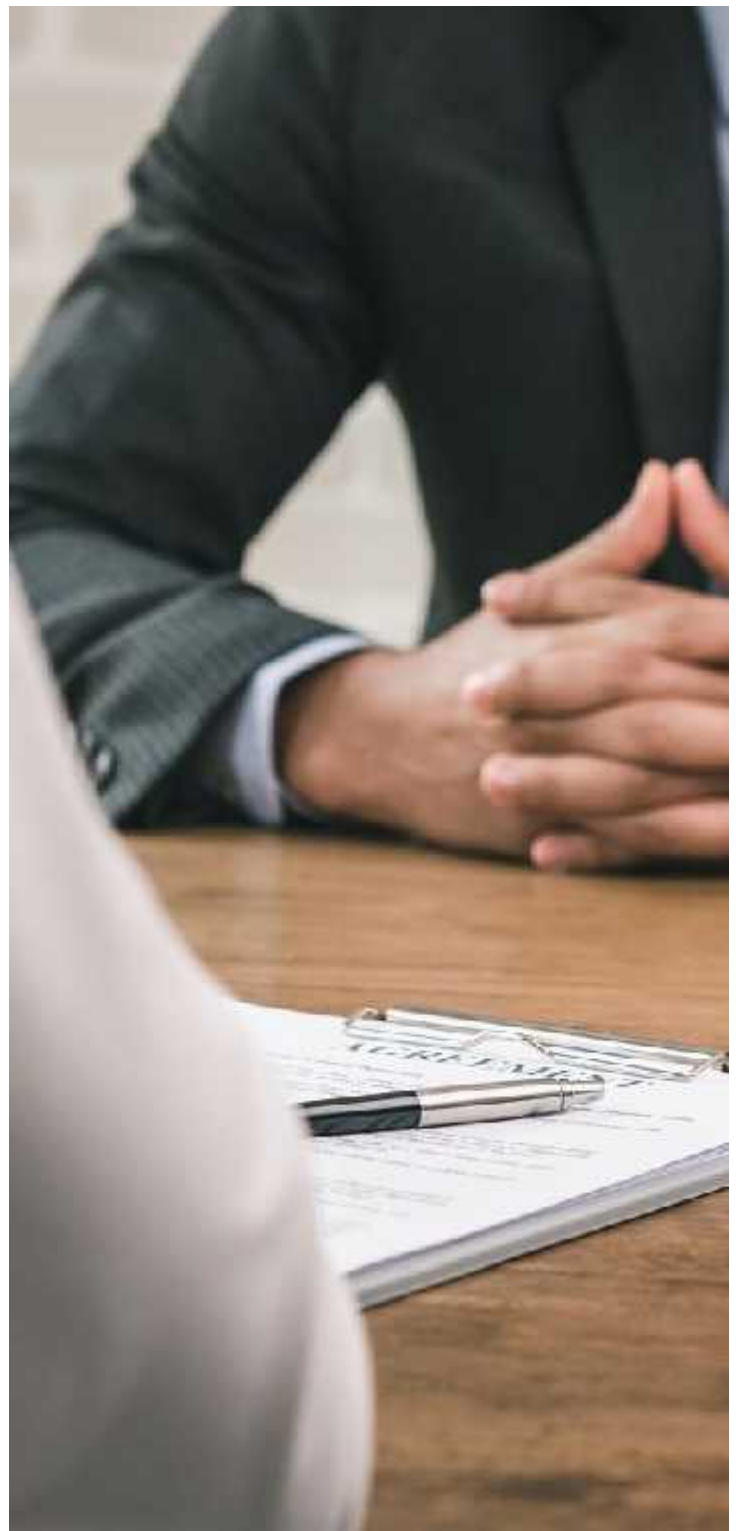
- [From Autism Speaks about disclosing your diagnosis to your employer](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about your employment rights](#)

Words to know

accommodations

disclosure

reasonable accommodations





Action step 3.

Get support to help you manage your money.

You may need support to help you learn to manage money on your own. Many people need help with things like banking, budgeting and paying taxes. Learn about [ABLE accounts](#), [special needs trusts](#) and other financial resources to help you manage your money now and in the future.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [More from Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about how to find a financial planner near you](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Financial Planning Tool Kit](#)

Words to know

ABLE account

special needs trust

Moderate Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

Be Active in Your Community



Action step 1.

Explore interests through community programs.

Community programs are good ways to explore interests and make connections outside of home and school. Try different programs to find out what you like best:

- Do you like to do things that have a lot of structure and organized activities? Or do you like to do things on your own?
- Do you like to be part of a group or to do things by yourself? Do you like to compete with others?

Learning about your likes and dislikes can help you think about what kind of job you may want in the future.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about community-based skills assessment](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find community activities near you](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find after-school activities near you](#)

Action step 2.

Plan for supports before, during and after activities.

The right **supports** before, during and after activities can help you get the most from them. Activities designed for young autistic people can help you develop **social skills** and make connections in the community. Activities may need planning, like:

- Packing a bag the night before
- Scheduling breaks during the activity
- Having a healthy snack ready for when you get home

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about being active in your community](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about recreational activities](#)

Words to know

social skills

supports





Action step 3.

Transfer skills from home and school to community activities.

Skills needed to do tasks at home and school can help you get ready to be active in the community. You may need supports to do certain things on your own. Even with help, building skills promotes:

- Confidence. This means believing that you can do something.
 - Motivation. This means wanting to do something.
 - Teamwork. This means working with others.
- You can transfer skills learned early on to a future job setting.

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks Transition Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about developing independence](#)

Action step 4.

Develop social communication and self-advocacy skills.

Social communication can be the most challenging part of employment for autistic people. Some schools and therapy programs use **role play** to work on interviewing and social skills. Connecting with the autism community and **peer mentors** can help you understand your needs and learn about **self-advocacy**.

Resources

- [From the Autistic Self Advocacy Network about self-advocacy](#)
- [From Spectrum on social communication](#)

Words to know

peer mentor

role play

self-advocacy

social communication

social skills



Moderate Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 1:

Set Employment Goals



Action step 1.

Think about jobs and careers related to interests and skills.

As a teen, you can be active in the earliest discussions about future employment. Start with talking about your:

- Interests, including places and activities you like
- Skills and what you're good at
- Sensory preferences
- Social preferences

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about where to find employment supports](#)

Words to know

sensory preferences

social preferences

Action step 2.

Include employment assessments and goals in the IEP transition plan.

Employment assessment is part of IEP transition planning that begins sometime between ages 14 and 16. Timing of planning depends on state law. You and your parents participate in transition planning meetings with the IEP team and help set employment goals. For many students, a job skills assessment is a first step in the transition process.

Resources

- [From Understood about transition and IEPs](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about transition services and planning](#)

Words to know

employment assessment

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning

job skills assessment



Moderate Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 2:

Begin to Manage Money



Action step 1.

Use cash and credit responsibly.

Keeping track of money can be hard. It's easy to overspend! Learning how to use cash and credit cards takes time and practice. You may want to use cash for everyday use. You may need support to learn to use a wallet to organize cash, cards and receipts. Using a [token system](#) and managing an allowance can help you learn to budget.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial planning](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about being safe with money](#)
- [From the Federal Trade Commission about various financial topics](#)

Words to know

token system

Action step 2.

Learn good shopping and spending habits.

Buying new things can be fun. You may like to shop in a store. Or you may want to shop online. [Supports](#) can help you learn to shop, place orders and get good buys. For example, you can use spoken, typed or [visual scripts](#) to practice:

- Placing an order
- Asking for help
- Paying a cashier

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial resources](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about handling money](#)

Words to know

supports

visual script





Action step 3.

Start planning for Supplemental Security Income.

When you turn 18 you apply for [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#). SSI is money for people with disabilities who have limited income. You have to apply for SSI at age 18, even if you already had it when you were younger. It can take a long time to apply. So get started early, well before you turn 18.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about SSI and other financial aid](#)
- [From Social Security about SSI](#)
- [From benefits.gov about SSI](#)

Words to know

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Moderate Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

Get Work Experience



Action step 1.

Identify adult employment services and supports.

Because of the [Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act](#), employment services like [vocational rehabilitation](#) and [Ticket to Work](#) are available to help students get ready for employment. Each state has its own rules for these programs. If you don't get these services, using supports can help you get ready to work. For example, you may want to:

- Visit the jobsite before you start working to see what it's like.
- Make a script to help you ask for an [accommodation](#), like using headphones.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about preparing for employment](#)
- [From the Council State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation about state services](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor on WIOA](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy on services for autism](#)
- [From the U.S. Social Security Administration on Ticket to Work](#)

Words to know

accommodation

supports

Ticket to Work

vocational rehabilitation

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Action step 2.

Practice social communication and self-advocacy skills.

Transfer [social communication](#) and [self-advocacy](#) skills you learned in school to community activities. Practice what you learned about [advocating](#) for your needs. For example, you can discuss your needs at your next [IEP meeting](#).

Resources

- [From the Administration for Community Living about employment](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about self-advocacy](#)

Words to know

advocating

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting

self-advocacy

social communication

social communication skills



Moderate Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

Plan for Work



Action step 1.

Plan for transportation.

Many young adults use [public transportation](#) or [rideshare services](#) to get to work. A [support person](#) can ride with you until you feel safe and confident to go on your own. In some areas, [paratransit services](#) help people with disabilities. These drivers watch out for you along the way and even drop you off at your door!

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about transportation resources near you](#)
- [From the CDC about public transportation](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Transportation about public transportation](#)

Words to know

paratransit

public transportation

rideshare services

support person

Action step 2.

Ask for accommodations, if needed.

Vocational specialists and job coaches at your school and local employment services can help you identify and ask for accommodations at work. Asking for accommodations and supports can help you gain confidence and advocate for yourself as a new worker.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about disclosing your diagnosis to your employer](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about your employment rights](#)

Words to know

accommodations

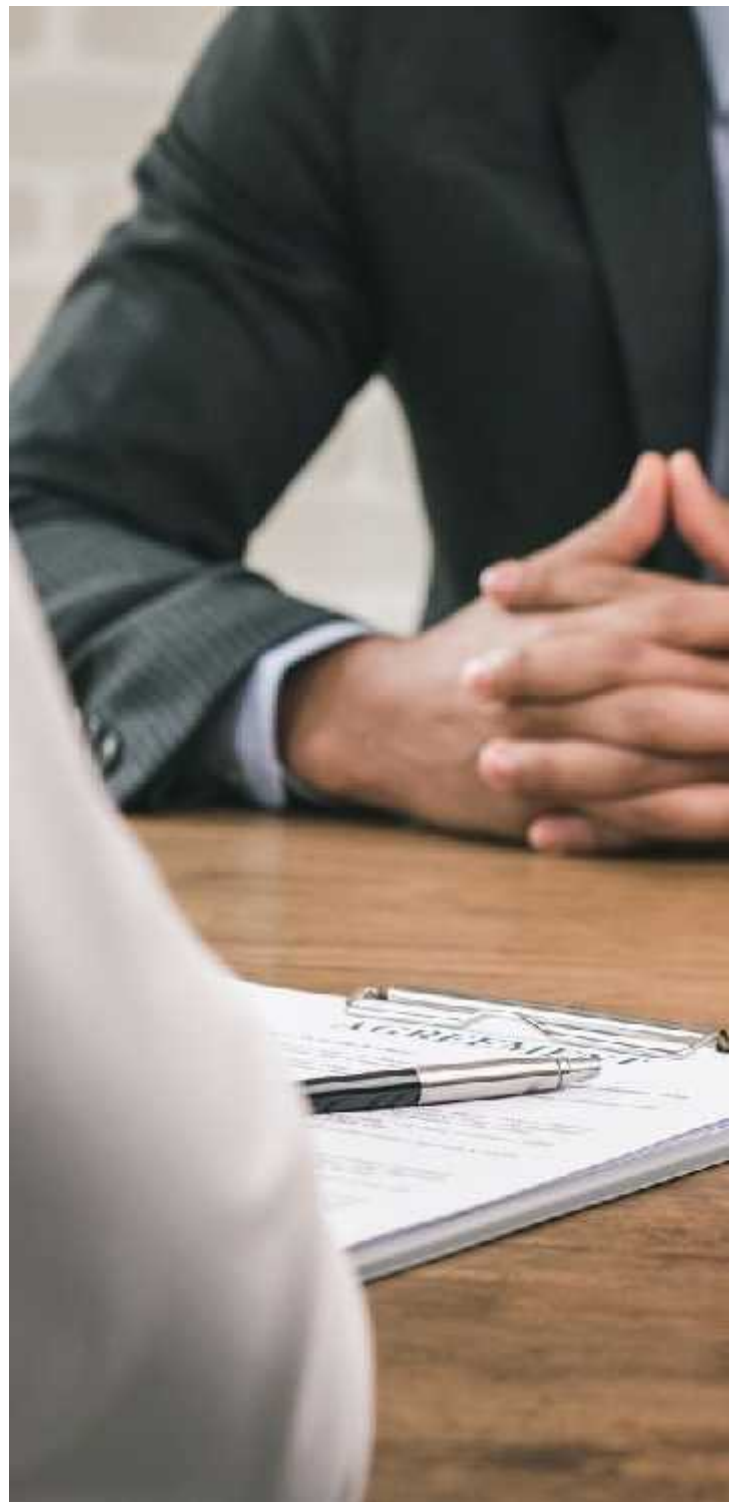
advocate

confidence

job coach

supports

vocational specialist





Action step 3.

Get support to help you manage your money.

Many autistic people share money responsibilities, like banking and budgeting, with a [support person](#). Others may use a [professional financial representative](#) to help with things like [life insurance](#) and [Social Security](#). Learn about [ABLE accounts](#), [special needs trusts](#) and other financial resources to help you manage your money now and in the future.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [More from Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about financial representation](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about how to find a financial planner near you](#)
- [From the ABLE National Resource Center on ABLE accounts](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Financial Planning Tool Kit](#)

Words to know

ABLE account

life insurance

professional financial representative

Social Security

special needs trust

support person

Intensive Support • Ages 10-14 • Goal:

Be Active in Your Community



Action step 1.

Explore interests through community programs.

Community programs offer good ways to explore interests and make connections outside of home and school. Try different programs to find out what you like best:

- Do you like certain subjects, places or [sensory experiences](#)?
- Do you like to be creative?
- Do you like physical activities, like dance or sports?

Developing interests through community programs is a good step in thinking about future jobs and careers.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about community-based skills assessment](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find community activities near you](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about where to find after-school activities near you](#)

Words to know

[sensory experience](#)

Action step 2.

Plan for supports before, during and after activities.

The right [supports](#) and [accommodations](#) before, during and after activities can help you get the most from them.

Activities designed for young autistic people can help you develop [social skills](#) and make connections in the community. Activities may need planning, like:

- Packing a bag the night before
- Scheduling breaks during the activity
- Having a healthy snack ready for when you get home

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about being active in your community](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about recreational activities](#)

Words to know

accommodations

social skills

supports





Action step 3.

Transfer skills from home and school to community activities.

Skills needed to do tasks at home and school can help you get ready to be active in the community. You may need supports to do certain things on your own. Even with help, building skills promotes:

- Confidence. This means believing that you can do something.
 - Motivation. This means wanting to do something.
 - Teamwork. This means working with others.
- You can transfer skills learned early on to a future job setting.

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks Transition Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about developing independence](#)

Intensive Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 1:

Set Employment Goals



Action step 1.

Think about jobs and careers related to interests and skills.

What do you like to do most? What are you good at? What do you need help with? Even if you need support, you may be interested in certain:

- Topics, like art, history or science
- Places and activities
- **Sensory experiences.** These are things that stimulate (activate) your senses, including sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste.

Linking your interests and skills to a future job is a good starting point for employment.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about where to find employment supports](#)

Words to know

sensory experience

Action step 2.

Include employment assessments and goals in the IEP transition plan.

Employment assessment is part of IEP transition planning that begins sometime between ages 14 and 16. Timing of planning depends on state law. You and your parents participate in transition planning meetings with the IEP team and help set employment goals. For many students, a job skills assessment is a first step in the transition process.

Resources

- [From Understood about transition and IEPs](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about transition services and planning](#)

Words to know

employment assessment

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning

job skills assessment



Intensive Support • Ages 14-16 • Goal 2:

Begin to Manage Money



Action step 1.

Learn basic money management.

Learning to manage money can be challenging. Budgeting and planning for expenses can be hard to understand. Hands-on, visual activities, like [token systems](#) and shopping in classroom stores, can help you understand how earning money, budgeting and buying things all work together.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial planning](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about being safe with money](#)
- [From the Federal Trade Commission about various financial topics](#)

Words to know

token system

Action step 2.

Use supports to help with shopping.

Supports can help you learn to shop, place orders and buy things. The right supports can help reduce **anxiety** and make you feel more confident about shopping. Examples of shopping supports include:

- Using spoken, typed or **visual scripts** to practice ordering food or paying a cashier
- Using a **visual schedule** or **picture cards** to make shopping lists

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about financial resources](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about handling money](#)
- [From the National Autistic Society about tips for shopping with autism](#)
- [From Psychology Today about what it's like for autistic shoppers](#)

Words to know

anxiety

picture cards

supports

visual schedule

visual script





Action step 3.

Start planning for Supplemental Security Income.

When you turn 18 you apply for [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#). SSI is money for people with disabilities who have limited income. You have to apply for SSI at age 18, even if you already had it when you were younger. It can take a long time to apply. So get started early, well before you turn 18.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about SSI and other financial aid](#)
- [From Social Security about SSI](#)
- [From benefits.gov about SSI](#)

Words to know

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Intensive Support • Ages 16-18 • Goal:

Get Work Experience



Action step 1.

Plan for adult employment services.

Getting adult employment services starts with a [job skills assessment](#). The assessment is part of your [IEP transition plan](#). It can help you figure out if you can use [vocational rehabilitation](#) services to help you find work.

In states with [Medicaid waiver programs](#), services may include job training, placement and coaching. Find out about employment services in your state.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about preparing for employment](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about finding vocational rehabilitation services near you](#)
- [From the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on state waivers](#)
- [From the Council State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation about state services](#)
- [From Medicaid.gov on Home & Community-Based Services](#)

Words to know

individualized education program (IEP) transition plan

job skills assessment

Medicaid

Medicaid waiver program

vocational rehabilitation

Action step 2.

Improve social communication and self-advocacy skills.

Communication is key to [self-advocacy](#). IEP goals may include [alternative methods of communication](#), like [picture exchange](#) or an app on a tablet. These can be helpful when communicating with new people, including coworkers. Important self-advocacy skills include:

- Saying no
- Asking for help

Resources

- [From the Administration for Community Living about employment](#)
- [From Wrightslaw about self-advocacy](#)

Words to know

alternative methods of communication

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

picture exchange

self-advocacy

social communication

social communication skills





Action step 3.

Build job skills and learn to work independently.

The IEP transition plan includes job skills and employment goals. You can transfer skills learned and practiced at home and school to the workplace. Identifying [supports](#) that can be transferred to work can help you build [confidence](#) in yourself as you start to work. These supports can include [visual schedules](#) or written checklists.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about finding a job](#)
- [From the Autism Awareness Center, Inc. about summer jobs](#)

Words to know

confidence

supports

visual schedule

Action step 4.

Set goals to develop independence and self-regulation.

Independence and **self-regulation** are keys to success at work. Your IEP includes goals for self-regulation, self-care and completing tasks and routines independently. Transfer strategies that work well for you at home and school to your job, like:

- Following a schedule
- Using soothing items, like a stress ball or fidget cube

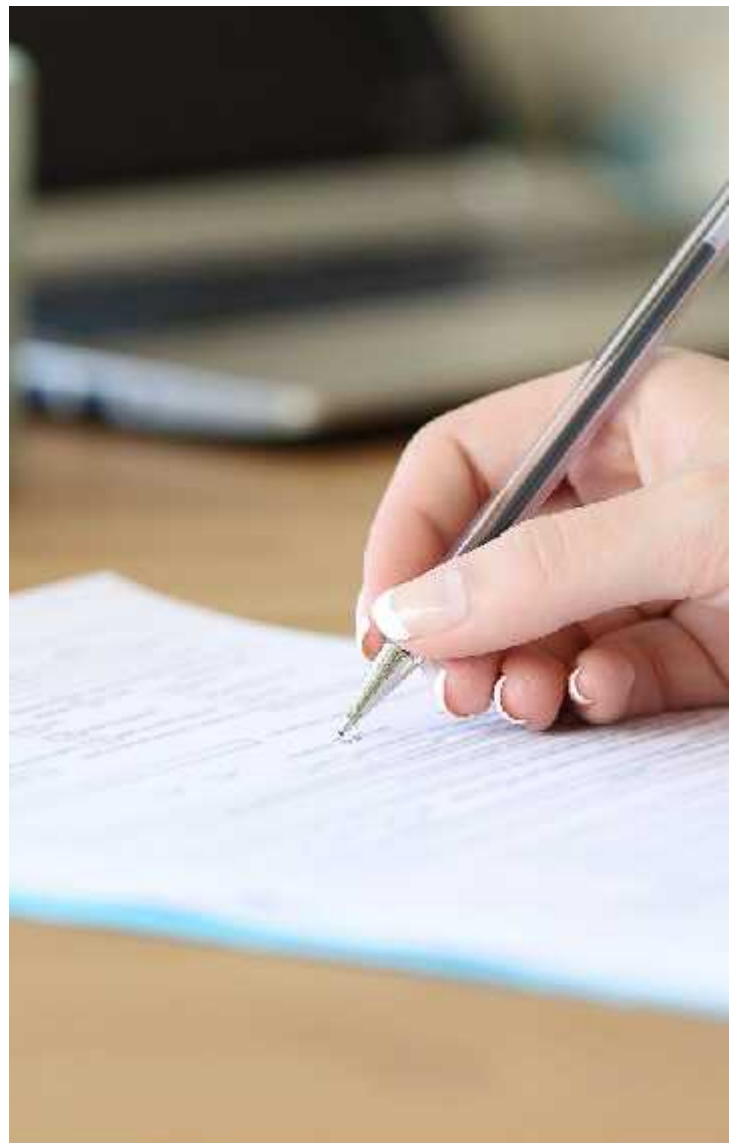
Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about executive functioning skills](#)
- [From Parent Toolkit about teens and executive functioning](#)

Words to know

independence

self-regulation



Intensive Support • Ages 18-22 • Goal:

Plan for Work



Action step 1.

Use transportation with direct support.

Many young adults use [public transportation](#) or [rideshare services](#) to get to work. Some states may pay for a [support person](#) to ride with you. Ask about what's available in your state. Some areas have [paratransit services](#) to help people with disabilities. These drivers watch out for riders and even drop you off at your door!

Resources

- [From the Autism Speaks about transportation resources near you](#)
- [From the CDC about public transportation](#)
- [From the U.S. Department of Transportation about public transportation](#)

Words to know

paratransit

public transportation

rideshare services

support person

Action step 2.

Increase self-advocacy through communication.

If you're an [emerging communicator](#), asking for help is a key step for [self-advocacy](#). If you're an [experienced communicator](#), ask for [supports](#) you need. More and more employers are training staff to use [alternative methods of communication](#) and supports, like:

- [Visual prompts](#)
- [Sensory breaks](#)

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about self-advocacy in transition](#)
- [From Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about your employment rights](#)

Words to know

alternative methods of communication

emerging communicator

experienced communicator

self-advocacy

sensory break

supports

visual prompts





Action step 3.

Choose a financial representative.

A [professional financial representative](#) or [legal guardian](#) can take care of finances and [government benefits](#) for you. Learn about [ABLE accounts](#), [special needs trusts](#) and other financial resources to help you manage your money now and in the future.

Resources

- [From Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [More from Autism Speaks about ABLE accounts](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about financial representation](#)
- [From Autism Speaks about how to find a financial planner near you](#)
- [From the ABLE National Resource Center on ABLE accounts](#)
- [From the Autism Speaks Financial Planning Tool Kit](#)

Words to know

ABLE account

government benefits

legal guardian

professional financial representative

special needs trust

support person

Glossary

A

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account.

A savings account that helps people with disabilities and their families save for housing, education, transportation, medical and other expenses related to their disability. It helps individuals with disabilities, including autism, save for future needs without losing access to other resources.

accommodations.

Changes or adjustments that help meet a person's individual needs. Examples include getting extra time for training, taking a test orally instead of in writing and working one-on-one with coworker.

advocate. (verb)

To speak up for your wants and needs.

alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

Methods of communication for people who can't use speech (talking) to communicate; examples include sign language and using a computer for speech.

anxiety.

Strong feelings of worry or fear about everyday activities.

C

confidence.

Believing that you can do something.

credit card.

Lets you borrow money to pay for something and then you pay the money back later.

D

debit card.

Takes money directly out of a bank account.

disclosure.

Telling others about your disability.

E

emerging communicator.

Also called a beginning communicator. Someone who is just getting started with alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

employment assessment.

A test or tests to see what kind of job you may like or be good at.

executive functioning skills.

Skills that help you stay organized and respond to situations. They help you with things like planning, paying attention and managing time.

experienced communicator.

Someone who can communicate clearly with alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

G

government benefits.

Government programs that help people with disabilities with things like health care, housing, independent living skills and paying for college.

guardian.

Also called legal guardian. The person who has legal responsibility to take care of a child or adult.



independence.

Not wanting or needing a lot of help from other people.

Individualized Education Program (IEP).

A plan that identifies programs, goals, services and supports to make sure a student with a disability gets a free and appropriate education at school.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

A meeting that must happen at least once a year to make sure a student's IEP has the right programs, goals and services to get the appropriate education at school.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

The team that works on an IEP to make sure it meets a student's needs. The team can include the student, parents, teachers, a school district representative and service providers, like a speech therapist or an occupational therapist.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition planning.

Goals in a student's IEP that help plan for life after high school. Schools must measure and report on the goals.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A U.S. law that makes sure that students with disabilities get free and appropriate education in public schools that meets their individual needs.

intensive support.

See levels of support. Hourly support needed for most daily activities.



job coach.

Someone who helps you learn how to do your work and the daily tasks that you're responsible for.

job shadowing.

A kind of job training in which you work along with an employee and participate in their daily activities.

job skills assessment.

Questions that help you find out what jobs and careers may be good for you.



legal guardian.

See guardian.

levels of support.

Some support: Support not needed for most daily activities.

Moderate support: Daily support needed for some but not all daily activities.

Intensive support: Hourly support needed for most daily activities.

life insurance.

Provides money for people like your partner and your children when you die.



Medicaid.

A U.S. government program that provides health coverage to many Americans, including eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. Medicaid is managed by each state, and each state sets its own program guidelines.

Medicaid waiver program.

When states waive (don't enforce) Medicaid rules so they can provide services to people who may not qualify for Medicaid. An example of a Medicaid waiver is the Home and Community-Based Services waiver. Some states have waiver programs just for people with autism.

mentor.

Someone who teaches you or gives you help or advice.

moderate support.

See levels of support. Daily support needed for some but not all daily activities.



organizational tools.

Tools that can help you with planning and completing a task. Examples include checklists, calendars and daily planners.



paraprofessional.

In school, someone who helps teachers and students but doesn't have a license to be a teacher.

paratransit services.

Transportation services that are more flexible than public transportation, like trains and buses that have a fixed route and schedule. Paratransit often uses a minibus. But it also can be shared-ride taxis, a carpool or a vanpool.

peer mentor.

Someone you trust who is your age or who has similar life experiences as you. A peer mentor listens without judgment and supports you in pursuing your goals and dreams.

picture cards.

Cards that identify a word, phrase or idea with a picture.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

A tool that helps people communicate with pictures.

preference.

What you like or want more than something else.

problem-solving.

Finding a solution to a problem.

professional financial representative.

A business professional you hire to help you make decisions about money.

public transportation.

Buses, trains, subways and other kinds of transportation for use by the general public.



R

reasonable accommodations.

Realistic changes in the workplace that help employees with disabilities do their job. Examples include adapting certain equipment or lighting, changing the way tests and trainings are provided or offering flexible work schedules.

rideshare services.

Transportation services provided by private individuals in their own cars. Examples include Uber and Lyft.

role play.

Acting out a conversation or situation to practice for being in real life situations. For example, you can role play answering questions in a job interview.

S

school psychologist.

A child psychologist who works for a school or school district to help students who have mental health conditions, including problems with thinking, feeling and behavior.

self-advocacy.

Being able to communicate your needs and preferences to others. It includes understanding your needs and legal rights, knowing what help and support you need, and communicating your needs to others.

self-advocate (noun).

Someone who can communicate their needs and preferences to others.

self-regulation.

Taking action to deal with challenging emotions or behavior or sensory discomfort. For example, you may count or take deep breaths to calm yourself down.

sensory break.

A short break from activities to help you self-regulate. For example, you may take a sensory break, like leaving the room for a short time, to reduce discomfort from sounds, sights, lights or other people. Or you may take a break, like taking a walk, when you need to boost your energy or to be better at paying attention.

sensory experience.

Something that stimulates (activates) your senses, including sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, balance and orientation.

sensory preferences.

What you know about how you see, hear, smell, taste or feel things and what you need to be able to participate in settings and activities. For example, if you need to avoid bright lights to feel comfortable, your preference may be to turn the lights down or to sit in a darker part of the room.

sensory toy.

A toy that helps manage one or more of your senses to help you calm down and focus your attention. Examples include fidgets, toys that light up, sand art and massage balls.

social communication.

See social communication skills.

social communication skills.

Skills needed to communicate with people. Examples include being able to have a conversation with someone; using non-verbal communication, like body language; and using language for different reasons, like to give information or to ask a question.

social connection.

Feeling comfortable being around someone.

Social Security.

A U.S. government program that pays money to people with limited income, including people with disabilities and people who are retired or don't have jobs.

social skills.

Skills needed to communicate and interact with people; skills can be verbal (talking) and nonverbal (gestures, body language and appearance).

social skills group.

A group that meets to practice social skills.

social preferences.

What you know about how you interact best with others and what you need to be able to participate in settings or activities. For example, you may prefer one-on-one conversations with people rather than being in a group conversation. Or you may prefer going to a movie with friends rather than going to a party with friends.

some support.

See levels of support. Support not needed for most daily activities.

special needs trust.

A savings fund that provides money to a person with disabilities but doesn't affect if the person gets government benefits, like Social Security or Medicaid.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

A U.S. government program that provides cash to people with disabilities who have limited income (less than \$2,000 in their name).

support levels.

See levels of support.

support person.

Someone who helps you with things like communication, transportation, medical care and daily living.

support team.

A group of people who support you with things like communication, transportation, medical care and daily living. The team may include parents and other family members, friends, mentors, health professionals, job coaches, teachers and paraprofessionals.

supports.

Tools or services that help people with autism in their daily lives. Examples of supports include activities that get you involved in the community, communication devices, job coaching, mentors, social skills groups and summer camp programs.



teamwork.

Working with other people to complete a task or achieve a goal.

Ticket to Work.

A U.S. government program that connects people age 18-64 who get Social Security disability benefits and want to work with free employment services, including job counseling, vocational rehabilitation, job training and job placement.

time management.

Planning and controlling the amount of time you spend on daily activities.

token system.

A program to help you achieve goals. You get a physical token (something you can hold in your hand) when you complete a task. You collect them and trade them later for a reward. Tokens can be things like poker chips, marbles or coins.



visual prompt.

Also called a visual cue. A picture, video or written instructions that help you learn or know to do a task or follow directions.

visual schedule.

A support that uses pictures to show the steps needed to complete a task.

visual script.

A written conversation of appropriate communication in social situations. Examples include what to say to a teacher, bus driver or a cashier at a store.

vocational rehabilitation (VR).

A program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs.

vocational specialist.

A trained professional who helps people with disabilities set goals and understand their skills for getting and keeping a job.



Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA).

A U.S. law that helps Americans get education, training and support services to help them get and succeed in jobs and careers. It also helps employers hire and keep skilled workers.