

## **Tips for Families in Special Education Making the Transition from High School to Adult Life**

The Transition out of High School comes with considerable changes. There are many options to consider during this time. Here are some things to think about as your student prepares to leave High School.

### **During High School:**

**Work closely with your High School Counselor and Teacher of Record and/or Special Education Coordinator** - They can answer questions about next steps for your student and the programs your student may be eligible for.

**Classes** - As you are finishing your academic years at Samohi, keep track of the classes needed to make sure you are on track.

<https://www.smmusd.org/Page/6429>

**Diploma Track vs Alternative Diploma vs Certificate Track** - Make sure you understand what options will be available for your student with a Diploma, Alternative Diploma, and a Certificate of Completion. There are advantages to all. Consider what will be best for your student and family.

<https://www.smmusd.org/Page/6707>

If your student graduates with a Diploma, they are *not* eligible for the Adult Transition Program, but may still be eligible for assistance from the Workability staff or Westside Regional Center, among others.

If your student is eligible for the Alternative Diploma or Certificate of Completion, they are eligible to receive services from the school until their 22nd birthday. This program is called the Adult Transition program.

**PAES Lab** - The Special Education department has a PAES lab for career tasks for functional skill development and exploration. The Lab is a contained learning space with different skill modules that students can work through. Each module focuses on a potential career pathway, and the skills required for success along the way. Students can explore Business/Marketing, Computer Technology, Construction/Industrial, Processing/Production and Consumer/Service. Modules have progressive skill tasks that give the students the opportunity to develop and test their skill levels, as well as interest for potential career pathways.

**The Adult Transition Program** - This program involves a lot of community interaction, independence development, life skills and job experience. The program takes place on the Santa Monica High School Campus. All SMMUSD students who are eligible for Adult Transition may attend the program at Santa Monica High School. The Adult Transition Classroom is equipped with a bedroom, laundry facilities and a full kitchen for instruction for teaching life skills. It is important for parents to understand that the Adult Transition Program is not an academic program. This program is designed to help students develop work and independent living skills. Most students that are in the Adult Transition Program are also supported by the Workability Program.

Here's a short video introduction to the SAMOHI Adult Transition program on YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp03TFx-lxc>

**Workability Program** - The Workability Program provides high school students with an IEP, either receiving a diploma or a certificate of completion, with internship and work experience. The focus of the Workability program is to help students develop independent work skills. When students have the necessary skills and appropriate placements are available, the program works to place students at work sites with local businesses.

<https://www.smmusd.org/Page/4212>

**Department of Rehabilitation** - The Department of Rehabilitation works with people who have disabilities to help them get jobs, develop or promote in their current jobs, live on their own, and enjoy a life equal to others. Some of the services it offers include: Disability and benefits programs; Job search and interview skills; Job training and tools; College and textbooks; Disability equipment; Support services like childcare or transportation; and Connecting you with other people or groups that may be able to help.

<https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/StudentServices/>

Student Services Program:

- Eligibility: (a) Must be a student (you need to be enrolled in school, but it's okay if you're on break or if school hasn't started yet), (b) Must be between the ages of 16 and 21 (including 16 and 21), (c) Must either (i) have a 504 Plan, or you are eligible for an IEP, (ii) have an IEP or (iii) have a disability.

Services:

- Job Exploration Counseling - They can help students figure out a career path by providing information regarding what a job pays, what careers match your interests, etc.

- Post-Secondary Counseling - They help students explore the colleges they are interested in, the requirements to get into each college, and options to pay for college.
- Workplace Readiness Training - They help students learn how to search and apply for a job, understand employer expectations, develop social skills for the workplace, strengthen communication skills, and practice money management skills.
- Self Advocacy - They help students understand their rights and responsibilities at work, participate in leadership activities (such as Youth Leadership Program), and learn about accommodations and supports. A DOR rep can attend meetings with students to help them receive college accommodations and other assistance.
- Work Based Learning Experience - They can help students find short-term employment and internships, on the job training, and volunteer opportunities, and help pay for required specialty equipment. They offer up to 300 work hours per school year and 20 hours per week.

### **Plan for the Transition:**

**Review the SELPA Transition Handbook for Parents by Parents.** This handbook has a lot of information about post High School options for families with people with disabilities. This handbook is written by families that are in the SELPA - local families that have already walked this path with their family members.

English version.

<https://www.smmusd.org/cms/lib/CA50000164/Centricity/Domain/304/SELPA-TransitionHandbook.pdf>

Spanish version

<https://www.smmusd.org/cms/lib/CA50000164/Centricity/Domain/304/SELPA-TransitionHandbookSP.pdf>

### **Important things to think about before your student leaves High School**

**Autonomy** - When a person turns 18 they are a legal adult! As parents of students with disabilities this can seem like it will never happen and sneak up on us. Be sure to give full consideration to what your family member will now be responsible for in their lives. We all want the best for our kids, so make sure they are set up with the best resources possible for their success at this age. As parents, you will no longer be the decision-maker in key categories of your family members life.

**Self-Advocacy** - Self advocacy means the interest and ability to assert one's desires and rights. This may involve learning to problem solve and how to make decisions to the best of one's ability. As your student is in high school you may ask yourself if you have allowed your student to be as independent as possible. Can your student function without a dedicated paraprofessional at this age or can they begin to practice their skills and independence? High school and the Adult Transition Programs are safe places to practice these skills.

**Limited Conservatorship** - When our children reach the age of 18, they are an adult in the eyes of the law, and have all of the rights and responsibilities that an adult has to make medical and other decisions. For parents who have a child with a disability, a limited conservatorship may be useful.

This information is provided in the Selva Transition Handbook for Parents by Parents.

There is also a helpful guide that was created by Bet Tzedek (2016) -

<https://www.bettzedek.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/BetTzedek2016LtdConservGuide-1.pdf>

Bet Tzedek offers free legal services, and they have also created a guidebook outlining limited conservatorship. They also have a self-help clinic that will help families through the limited conservatorship process. In addition, private attorneys can also provide services in this area.

“Limited Conservatorships are designed to support the needs of adults with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) whose disability began before the age of 18, interferes with cognitive development, is substantially handicapping, and is expected to last indefinitely. Autism, Epilepsy, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disability, Down Syndrome and similar conditions are Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities. They may have a psychiatric component, but mental illness by itself is not an I/DD.

When a person with I/DD turns 18, his or her parents/caregivers no longer have the right to make legal decisions for the adult. If the adult with I/DD lacks capacity, a limited conservatorship may be needed. Limited conservatorships were set up to promote and encourage a maximum of self-reliance and only give the conservator powers that the conservatee is unable to engage capably. The court requires the petition be very specific about the powers requested. A limited conservator can be appointed for someone who lacks capacity to perform some but not all tasks. California Probate Code §1801(d)”

**Accommodations in College** - If your student is attending a typical college program as a disabled person they may qualify for accommodations. It is important to know that modifications to material are not an option in typical college academic programs.

In order to receive accommodations, students must register with the Disability Resource Office (each office may have a different name at each college) once they have a student ID # and student email address. Student ID #/email addresses are generally issued as soon as students accept their admissions offer. This could happen during students' senior year, but definitely by the summer before the start of the school year. Students will need to provide their 504 plans, IEPs, neuropsych reports or other formal documentation of their disabilities and necessary accommodations. The documentation must be current (varies by school, but generally within the last 2-3 years) to qualify to receive standard accommodations. To receive non-standard accommodations additional support documents may be needed. Most colleges offer a grace period to turn in all documentation. For students who do not have current documentation, they should ask if a doctor's note would suffice (although it may be insufficient for some colleges).

For students who do not have the required current documentation and cannot afford testing, there may be free testing services offered by a college.

Once the documentation is in place, a meeting will be held to discuss eligibility and accommodations. Parents may attend meetings if the student agrees. If a parent or parents attend a meeting, staff may not respond to their questions or consider their comments. Once eligibility is established, the accommodations/modifications will last the entire time the student is enrolled in the college/university, including graduate school at the same college/university.

Standard accommodations generally include time and a half on tests, separate testing areas, and recorded lectures. Note takers are provided on almost all campuses. Some colleges offer free recording devices that you can use during class. They may also offer accessible furniture for students who require it.

Non-standard accommodations may include extended deadlines for homework/papers and modified attendance. The disabilities office must agree in advance to these special accommodations and the student must come to an agreement on the specifics with each professor in order to receive these accommodations. In some cases, a student may come to an agreement directly with the professor regarding special accommodations.

There are typically other campus services available such as tutoring and specialized counselors/advisors. While some of these services may be offered to all students, students with disabilities may receive priority and/or more services.

Most colleges offer counseling and mental health services, if needed.

There are accommodations for students with food allergies as well.

Pets are allowed if medically necessary.

Supplies and devices are not provided. If students need these things, they should inquire about grants and/or financial assistance.

Testing rooms are available with talk to text and verbal testing options in some colleges.

Students should check to see if there is a special student orientation for students with disabilities.

**College for Students with Intellectual Disability** - There are many programs and creative approaches to supporting students with Intellectual Disabilities in College, or non-academic college experiences. It often takes creative solutions and considered preparation to find success. ThinkCollege is a website dedicated to tracking these options. Check out this page for a good description of the possibilities and considerations families should think through as they explore college for their students with an Intellectual Disability.

<https://undivided.io/resources/thinking-about-college-for-students-with-intellectual-disabilities-1390>

**Leading a Purposeful, Passion Driven Life** - We should always try to remember why we put in all of the hard work we do with our family during our lifetime - so that we can all have the greatest opportunity to lead a purposeful, passion driven life. What does your child really want to do with their lives? What are their passions? If your child is unable to participate in hobbies or careers from a traditional pathway, what are creative and supported ways they may be able to enjoy their dreams?

### **A Starting Point**

The good news is that there are many options for people with disabilities after they leave the support of the school system. Here is an incomplete list of websites that can explain the resources available to help you on your way into the next chapter of life.

- Westside Regional Center  
<https://westsiderc.org/>
- Department of Rehabilitation  
<https://www.dor.ca.gov/>
- Think College Institute for Community Inclusion. Great list of college options around the country.  
<https://thinkcollege.net/>
- Santa Monica College, Office of Disability Resources  
<https://www.smc.edu/student-support/center-for-students-with-disabilities/>
- West LA, College to Career Program  
<https://www.wlac.edu/student-services/c2c>
- Taft College, Transition to Independent Living  
<http://www.taftcollege.edu/til/>
- UCLA Pathways Program (Residential or Commuter program)  
<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pathway>
- College of the Canyons (Example of Accommodations available)  
<https://www.canyons.edu/student-services/aac/index.php>
- Wayfinders Program at Fresno State  
<https://kremen.fresnostate.edu/centers-projects/wayfinders/index.html>
- College Internship Program (Long Beach y otros lugares)  
<https://cipworldwide.org/about-cip/cip-at-a-glance/>
- Long Beach City College (Disability services page)  
<https://www.lbcc.edu/disabled-student-services>
- California Transition Alliance  
<http://www.catransitionalliance.org/>
- LAUSD list of local Transition Support Resources  
<https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/17032>

## **Parent Resource Network**

Often, the best advice comes from those that have traveled the same path most recently. Connect with the Parent Resource Network to speak with another parent that has gone through the same transition you are going through. They should have the most recent and relevant information to share.

<https://www.smmusd.org/Page/6152>