

Launch into Life

planning great futures for young people with disability

Handy hints for parents
of students with disability
leaving school



Dream big:
think about what your
son or daughter likes,
what they're good at,
their personality,
not just what you think
they can 'get in to'.



Transition planning

- preparing for life after school

Our vision for young people with disability leaving school is that they will participate in the same range of opportunities and choices as all young people. *QPPD Transition Sub-Committee Vision*

For many parents the vision they have for their sons and daughters begins to emerge very early while the student is at school. The young person's interests, personality and skills influence choices for school subjects, recreation and in later years, work or work experience and careers after school. The same is true for young people with disability.

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (QPPD) Transition Sub-Committee has compiled this booklet as a resource to encourage young people and their families to dream and to plan for a great future and to ensure a smooth and successful transition process.

The advice provided is from parents who have already been through the transition phase with their son or daughter.

Many activities, employment or work experiences can provide opportunities to build long-term friendships with people who share common interests.

A whole realm of possibilities is opened to people with disability when they are included in the everyday life of the neighbourhood – possibilities such as recreation, employment, sharing accommodation and friendships.



Information in this booklet is provided in good faith by QPPD and was considered accurate at the time of publication.

This booklet outlines some of the steps young people and their families can take to move successfully to a fulfilling life after school.

Some important things to remember are:

- Start planning early (see the timeline on page 3 for ideas)
- Consider the young person's interests and strengths when thinking about options
- Ask for help (see the support and services sections on pages 5 and 9 for ideas)
- Involve the young person in decisions where possible
- Activities, employment or work experiences after school provide opportunities to build long-lasting friendships with people from the wider community.



Options for life after school

When thinking about life after school for a young person with disability, consider options such as:

- further study – mainstream courses or disability-specific programs
- paid work
- volunteer work, work experience or workplace training
- apprenticeships or traineeships – these can start at school
- supported employment
- recreation and/or respite programs
- moving out of home.



One young man wanted to play golf, so the coordinator of his service asked a member of the local golf club to support him in a paid capacity.

This person agreed to support him without payment and so the young man has become a golfer.

Establish a relationship with the Local Area Coordinator as early as possible. They can provide links and information for a person when the needs and plans for the person are well understood.



Timeline from transition during high school

YEAR 9

Start planning

Parent and student make list of interests, skills and talents to help select subjects and identify potential options for work experience, further education or career path.

Identify any barriers and issues to the ideal choice. Brainstorm solutions with teacher, School Transition Officer (STO) and other supporters/allies.

Build relationships

Form a relationship with the Local Area Coordinator (LAC) in your district if there is one.

In Year 9 or 10 at the latest, make a list of your son or daughter's interests and strengths.

List any barriers or obstacles, brainstorm for solutions. Be creative about options.

YEAR 10

Explore options

Explore possible TAFE subjects and courses, and school-based traineeships/apprenticeships.

Attend post school options expos, TAFE open days etc and gather information about services, further education etc.

Ask potential employers about work experience/work.

Seek support

Further develop relationships with your STO.

Ask about support from potential service providers for work experience or skills development courses.

Apply to Centrelink for Disability Support Pension before student turns 16.

YEAR 11

Check out services

Check with STO about services in your area. Visit services and see what clients are doing. (There may be new services/activities).

Review your plans

Review goals and strategies, work experiences – what worked, what failed and why?

Get more information

Ask Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) about alternative funding arrangements as a safety net. Sometimes the alternative may be more suitable.

Attend this year's Post School Options Expo as an update.

Ask other families who have already transitioned from school about their experiences and services.



school to post school life and beyond

YEAR 12

Review the options

Visit TAFE over a couple of weeks during first term of school. Have a look at what the students are doing in the disability specific courses to determine if this is suitable.

Visit service options again to determine availability/suitability. Talk with coordinators about activities/work experience options if not already being involved at school level.

Rough out what activities/work experience/work is suitable in advance of next year.

Apply for funding

Attend any DSQ information sessions. Get assistance for completing the application from STO or Head of Special Education Services (HOSES) or another family with experience. This process begins approximately mid year, but approval or denial for funding is not received until late November.

When acceptance of application is verified during interview it is recommended that you have already chosen a service provider. Ask about auspice/host options and flexibility of funding.

POST SCHOOL 1st YEAR

Maintain relationships

Maintain healthy working relationship with the service coordinator.

Monitor progress

An individual plan of activities/work support agreement should already be in place. This will require scrutiny and review to ensure satisfactory outcomes.

If attending further education courses, continue a steady dialogue with teachers to monitor the student's progress. If the young person is working and supported by an employment agency, ask what options there are if the position fails.

Ensure that whatever activities the person is doing provide progress and development for that person, no matter how slow or small – it should be worthwhile.

Be prepared to change

Discard what doesn't work, including relationships with support workers/employment situations and even service providers.

The first six months of the post school year can be problematic with staffing and timetable changes and trialling different activities. Don't lose heart, but be vigilant about quality activities. If you don't like what you son or daughter is doing they probably won't either!

Transition support – helping you plan

The table below outlines the major sources of help when planning for life after school.

| Role | Who they are | What they do | How to find them |
|---|---|--|---|
| School Transition Officers (STOs) | Specialist staff from the Department of Employment, Training and the Arts (DETA), covering 12 regions in Queensland | Assist schools and students to facilitate smooth transition by raising awareness of options, organising curriculum extension and providing information, planning assistance, advocacy and service links | Through your son or daughter's school or Education Queensland district office |
| Heads of Special Education Services (HOSES) | Specialist teaching staff, usually located in Special Schools or Special Education Units depending on the number of students enrolled | Coordinate teaching and support staff, and liaise with parents and school faculty regarding programs and performance reporting for students (report cards) | Through your son or daughter's school |
| Local Area Coordinators (LACs) | Staff employed by Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) outside metropolitan regions | LACs work at the individual, family and community level to facilitate positive changes that assist people with disability to live and participate in the community and assist families to continue to provide care | Contact DSQ, or go to the DSQ website page for Local Area Coordination www.disability.qld.gov.au |
| National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) | NDCOs are employed by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) | Provide information, referral and coordination activities for people with disability to help them participate fully in education, training and employment. Note that they work across very large regions | Through the DEEWR website or email ndco@deewr.gov.au |

Track down information and support. The best starting points for this are:

School Transition Officers, Local Area Coordinators and National Disability Coordination Officers.

- These people should be supportive of your choices for work experience.
- Ask them for information – find out about further education options, supports for employment, open employment and alternative funding sources.
- Ask them to organise an information session with Disability Services Queensland representatives from your area.

| Role | Who they are | What they do | How to find them |
|---|---|---|--|
| Post School Options Expos | Usually organised by HOSES and STOs | PSO Expos have displays and information booths from various services in your area | Contact your regional office of Education Queensland |
| TAFE and other training/ education providers | Providers of further education and training | Some TAFEs hold open days | Your local TAFE |
| Other families, school peers and friends, siblings without disability | Either at your school or in the nearby community | Can provide specific information regarding their own experiences in your own area | Ask parents from the Special School or Special Education Unit; contact parent support groups in the area |
| The general community | For example youth groups, sporting and recreation or interest groups | Can provide the “reality check” on what is typical for young people Can offer options for recreation, work or work experience | Your local newspaper or phone directory |
| Parent support and advocacy organisations | Organisations such as: QPPD Parent to Parent Qld Council of Carers Down Syndrome Association of Queensland (DSAQ) Mamre and the Pave the Way Project | These organisations provide advice, support and advocacy. For example DSAQ has a great transition kit with some helpful worksheets, such as “Finished School – What Now?” The Pave the Way Project assists families to plan an independent future for their son or daughter with disability | Look on the web, phone directory or ask other parents www.pavetheway@mamre.org.au |

Work experience – trying it out

Work experience will give your son or daughter a chance to try working life and experience industries or occupations that are of interest.

Tips for obtaining work experience

Consider strengths and interests:

- When considering the types of experiences your son or daughter would like to sample, first suggest areas he or she likes or in which he or she has shown some interest or talent. Don't limit this only to subject areas from school. It may be that he or she has a special interest in a sport, animal care or has a talent for labelling or sorting. Combine talents with interests.

Use your contacts:

- If you know someone with a business or work site, ask them if they could create a role that could use the student's skills.
- Talk to businesses or work sites associated with your school community
- Consider work sites within the school, such as the library, canteen or grounds staff.

Consider a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.

Work experience will also be very important for your son or daughter's future, longer-term employment options.

For example, if you are unable to obtain Post School Options funding your son or daughter may be able to continue doing work experience with the same employer.

This can have great potential for paid employment.

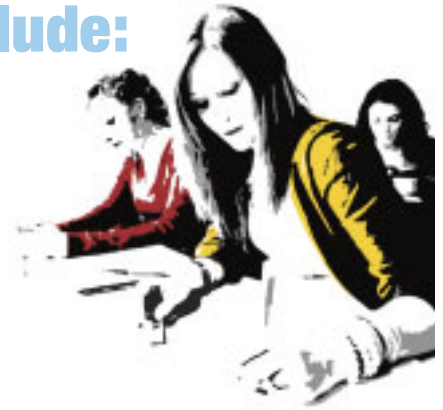


Further education = learning for life

Your son or daughter may decide to pursue further education through TAFE, university or a private education provider.

Options for further education include:

- mainstream courses
- access courses to prepare students for further study
- programs designed for people with high support needs.



Universities

Universities can provide note takers, interpreters and other supports and make accommodation for your son or daughter's needs.

Talk to the staff of the university's disability services or your National Disability Coordination Officer for information.

TAFE

Talk to your local training provider (e.g. TAFE) about courses and support for people with disability. Ask how, when and whether support is offered. TAFE will provide a teacher and tutor and may be able to provide a mentor for additional learning support. You will need to organise an interview with the TAFE Disability Officer, who will assess the student's support requirements.

Some students at TAFE use their post school funding for support to enable their attendance at TAFE courses, if they are unable to obtain support from TAFE.

Visit TAFE in the first term of Year 12 and ask to see what students are doing in the specific courses for students with disability. Visit as many times and as frequently as you need to determine whether these courses are appropriate for your son or daughter. You will need to make prior arrangements with TAFE for this.



Dream big: think about what your son or daughter likes, what they're good at, their personality, not just what you think they can 'get in to'.

Support services – making it work

A number of services exist to support young people in their transition from school to work, further study or other options.

The types of services that may be available include:

- Disability Employment Network Agencies – these organisations support people with disability into jobs through training, workplace support, personal support and advocacy
- Post School Services – these organisations can offer training, work experience and community access (recreation) options
- Business Services (previously known as sheltered workshops)
- Day Respite Services – these provide recreation and life-skills training opportunities, often centre-based.

Find out about the services available in your area by talking to Disability Services Queensland or your School Transition Officer, Local Area Coordinator or National Disability Coordination Officer. Check them out in Year 11:

- Talk to other parents, particularly those whose students are in Year 12 or have already left school. Ask them about their experiences with services
- Ask the services what they do, what programs they provide and whether they will do new things not currently on offer (this indicates how creative and flexible they might be).
- Find out more about your local Disability Employment Network agencies, ask questions, such as:
 - Are they successful in finding employment for people with high support needs or do they only assist people with low support needs?
 - Do they offer bridging courses to build skills for specific roles?
 - Is there a limit to the time offered in support for employment?
 - Do they work with employers to create roles/ jobs?



Try to get your Disability Employment Network service to support your son or daughter's work experience or training while they're still at school so you can see how they operate.

Choosing support services:

- Ask the school about trying some of the service options including employment agencies as part of work experience trials
- Think about your vision for your son or daughter. Like schools, some services manage clients as a group rather than providing a person-centred response. Try to find a service that will deliver what you think is in the best interests of the young person.
- Think about the best use of your funding package – how can you apply it to support your son or daughter to develop, have a good life and a good future?
- Visit services and really observe what the clients are doing. Visualise your son or daughter in that place.
 - Would they be engaged in worthwhile activities?
 - Would those activities be meaningful and progressing your son or daughter in their life?
 - Would those activities be merely filling in the day?
 - Can you imagine your son or daughter being happy, engaged, interested and developing their skills?

Working with support services:

- When meeting with your choice of service provider, be honest when discussing support needs. When discussing program activities focus on what your son or daughter likes to do and is good at and what you expect.
- Arrange transport that suits your family. Options include training to use public transport, paying a service to provide transport or parents arranging drop-off and pick-up.
- Ask the service provider for regular meetings to review your son or daughter's program and progress.
- Have constructive conversations with workers and the coordinator. Issues of compatibility between the young person and the worker should be addressed to your satisfaction. Don't be afraid to ask to change support workers.
- Use the first 12 months to identify issues and clarify what you want in terms of choice and style of service provision. You have the right to change service providers, and may even choose to "go it alone".

Some services offer types of work experience or training for groups of clients and may accommodate a student who is still at school within their groups i.e. literacy classes, computer classes.

Even simple social or art activities give an opportunity to gain insight to an agency's approach to support.

Remember that arranging transport through a service provider comes at a cost. This could mean relinquishing the mobility allowance to the service provider. It could also mean the young person spending more time as a passenger doing long 'transport runs' to pick up multiple clients, rather than taking part in their chosen activity. Some people choose to arrange drop-off and pick-ups themselves.

Funding options – financing a future

Funding is available to help young people with disability negotiate the transition from school.

The major types of funding currently available are:

- Centrelink benefits and pension cards – you should apply when your son or daughter is 16
- Mobility Allowance – may be available from Centrelink. You may also be able to get subsidised travel for a carer through the Queensland Rail Carelink Card
- Disability Services Queensland funding programs including Post School Services or Adult Lifestyle Support Program packages or one-off grants
- New Apprenticeship Wage Support scheme to fund additional learning support for apprentices and trainees attending TAFE courses.

We fear what will happen to our son or daughter after we are gone.

Planning and working towards a life for them that is safe and secure, interdependent and connected to the local community, and helping them develop skills that enable them to participate in work, will ensure that their life continues when we parents are gone.



Tips for getting funding:

- Attend any information sessions organised by Disability Services Queensland, or phone DSQ and ask them to explain the process and options for obtaining funding.
- Do not assume that funding will be granted – consider your alternatives.
- When applying for funding from DSQ, ask the School Transition Officer, Local Area Coordinator, HOSES or teacher to help. Failing this, ask DSQ – most representatives will offer advice and assistance. Ask other parents who have been successful in gaining funding to help you.
- Explore alternative funding sources. It is advisable to apply to all other funding sources at the same time as applying to DSQ or your son or daughter could finish school with no options for the following year.
- When filling out application forms, be honest but try to imagine how other people might perceive your son or daughter's support needs. During the school years we focus on their strengths and talents, but for the purpose of DSQ funding we must completely

change our presentation.

- To obtain funding we must list all the things we do to care for and support our son or daughter, even things we have become so accustomed to we pay no heed. It may be that we cut their food, assist with toileting, and interpret their language. There may be other support needs that require emphasis such as road safety, behaviour management or physical lifting.
- The emphasis is very negative and while this may be difficult it is essential. The application process is followed by an interview some time later with DSQ personnel. It is important to be consistent with the focus being negative and not fall back into being positive.
- Applying for funding usually happens around

the middle of the year.

Unfortunately funding is not approved or denied until late November, usually after senior students have already finished school.

- If you are successful a DSQ representative will phone to arrange a meeting with the student and family to discuss funding arrangements and choice of service provider.
- You have the option to apply for funding to create a business plan to seed an individual service for your son or daughter. An alternative is to be hosted by your choice of service provider. You may then employ your own choice of workers and create programs according to your son or daughter's needs and wishes. Ask about this option – DSQ may not tell you about it.

Quality, flexible and creative service provision can enhance opportunities for a person with disability. Services, however, can NOT deliver a life!

People who give freely of themselves form the relationships that support a lifestyle that is safe, valued, meaningful, busy and fun.

These people can come from the most unexpected places. Ask and you may be surprised and rewarded.

Employment - working in the world

Employment options for people with disability range from a “regular” job to options with more support.

Options to consider include:

- open employment (a job)
- supported open employment, where a support service helps the employee with training and workplace support
- apprenticeships and traineeships
- business services (previously known as sheltered workshops)
- voluntary work
- ongoing work experience or workplace training.

It may be possible for the employer to receive wage subsidies or incentives for employing people whose disabilities impact on their productivity. Centrelink or the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) will have information about this.

Consider employers in your community, or even a family business, to help your son or daughter get a start.

The ideal for work is if your son or daughter is doing something they enjoy and are good at, learning new skills and meeting people in an environment that’s supportive but also stimulating.

While the support for school students is often provided by specific aides, in open employment the support may be offered and freely given by co-workers or the employer.



Advocating for change - making things better

We hope that this booklet assists young people with disabilities and their families with helpful information that guides them through this process, and encourages them to expect, demand and receive more than many people find is currently on offer.

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability has been lobbying for over 25 years for more inclusive, comprehensive and coordinated support services for people with disability in areas of education and community living.

To date, a lack of cross-government collaboration or cooperation has resulted in the transition process for students with disability being fraught with a disjointed, underfunded, and haphazard trail of service, training, employment and educational options that many find difficult to negotiate. The experiences of young people vary according to where they live, and how supportive the local community can be, with unequal quality of service provision.

QPPD will continue in its advocacy efforts to improve this important phase for young people with disability. You can help us keep up this campaign for better post-school transition and outcomes.

More information

To find out more, contact
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Mission and Vision

QPPD vigorously defends justice and rights for people with disability by exposing exclusionary practices, speaking out against injustices and promoting people with disabilities as respected, valued and participating members of society.

Our vision for young people with disability leaving school is that they will participate in the same range of opportunities and choices as all young people.

Our mission is to advocate by the development and execution of strategies aimed at a systemic level, to ensure that young people with disability can pursue their chosen goals through work, further education, leisure and social activities, enjoyment of relationships, travel and an independent lifestyle.

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