



Great People Have Great Mentors

As a School Counselor, you inspire and encourage students to consider their talents, interests, and abilities in the exploration of future possibilities and potential. You provide important connections to resources and information about the education, training, and careers that await these young people.

The information in this booklet is a reminder that working with students with disabilities is very much the same as working with any student. It also highlights a few additional resources to keep in mind when thinking about some of the additional challenges these students may face.

Find Your Focus

Did you know: Students with disabilities who exit school without a job have increasingly greater job disparities over the years? Certain opportunities have shown increased success of future employment for students with disabilities. These include:

- Having a mentor
- Putting skills into practice through jobs, internships, or apprentice programs
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Having a role model
- Feeling like a part of the school culture

TIP:

Remember to hold high expectations for all of your students' future accomplishments – this high expectation is no different for students with disabilities. Young people live up to the expectations of those around them. Encourage parents to also hold high expectations for their children's future employment and self-sufficiency.

Strategies for Counseling Students with Disabilities

As you know, effective planning for any achievement or future success requires students to meet numerous challenges. Students with disabilities may face added challenges as they plan their transition from high school to future education and employment goals. You can help by encouraging students to take an active interest and role in their transition planning. Let them know their opinions and goals are important, and urge them to share their wants and needs in the transition planning process.

School Counselor Checklist

- Help students understand their abilities, interests, talents, and personality characteristics for developing realistic academic and career options.
- Encourage students with disabilities to take the coursework required to achieve their future goals.
- Review financial aid opportunities available specifically for students with disabilities.
- Advise students with disabilities of the availability of accommodations during standardized testing.
- Assist students in developing a comprehensive traditional or video transition portfolio or file to share with college admissions personnel and college service providers.
- Help students understand the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services available and learn how they can access VR services.
- Inspire students to explore their interests and abilities through summer jobs or internships.
- Promote the development of student responsibility by increasing opportunities for students to advocate for themselves and their needs.
- Understand that students with disabilities may have public disability benefits to consider when thinking about future employment. Know the resources that are available to help students and their families navigate their benefits and learn how they interact with employment.



Student Strategies

Your role in guiding students with disabilities to their future success is essential. Getting students with disabilities actively involved in their planning for their future employment is key.

Student Checklist

- Decide whether to self-disclose your disability prior to admission to college or employment.
- Role-play the college or employment interview with a counselor, special education teacher, or mentor.
- Develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills.
- Consider working at a part-time summer job, career related work experiences, or volunteer position.
- Learn about and use resources that can potentially help you find employment, such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).
- Know how, when, and where to discuss and request needed accommodations. Contact the Disability Support Services office at selected colleges and universities regarding necessary documentation required for accommodations.
- Become involved in your transition planning.
- Learn about technological aids such as talking calculators, spell checkers, voice-activated software, and electronic day planners. Try out different accommodations and auxiliary aids in high school classes to find what works best for you.
- Know the resources that are available to help you and your family navigate benefits information and learn how benefits interact with employment

Refine your Skills

While developing soft skills is an important tool for all students, it is especially important for students with disabilities. Soft skills are a building block to achieve successful transitions into postsecondary education, employment, and everyday life. Developing soft skills can include training around:

- communication
- technology
- organization
- career / employment awareness
- interpersonal skills
- problem solving / decision making / goal setting
- conflict resolution
- self-advocacy

Why Mentoring?

Behind every great person are great mentors. Think about how you got to where you are today. Who were the key people who influenced you and helped nurture you along the way? The value of mentoring relationships is crucial.

So what is mentoring? Mentoring lets someone build a relationship with another person who can help them to explore their talents, interests and skills. A mentor helps someone gain confidence while setting and achieving goals.

Mentors can:

- Foster possibilities for career and personal development,
- Assist in identifying interests,
- Offer reassurance, and
- Help students develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Check out **GreatPeopleGreatMentors.org** for links to resources on finding a mentor, being a mentor, and facilitating successful transitions for students with disabilities to successful careers.

Resources

Great People Have Great Mentors: <http://greatpeoplegreatmentors.org>

- Career Planning: <http://greatpeoplegreatmentors.org/career-planning>
- Benefits Planning and Counseling: <http://greatpeoplegreatmentors.org/benefits>
- Community Partners: <http://greatpeoplegreatmentors.org/community-partners>

Resources for School Counselors:

<http://greatpeoplegreatmentors.org/school-counselors>

