Entitlement vs Eligibility

Everyone in your child’s life – most especially, your child – has worked so hard for so long to reach this moment. And the payoff is here – either a High School Diploma or a Certificate of Program Completion. This means that your child’s public education is now complete. But in many ways, of course, your child’s life is actually just beginning. And there will be many new transitions to make.

When your child moves on to the next phase of life, whether it involves higher education, employment training or entry into the workforce, your child’s legal status will change. According to the federal IDEA (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), your child now moves from the stage of Entitlement to the stage of Eligibility. And while those words may not look that different on the screen, they are very different in terms of their impact on your child’s life.

Entitlement

A student with a disability who is receiving special education services is **ENTITLED** to a free and appropriate public education through the school year in which the student turns 21 or 22 years of age (depending on jurisdiction) or has met the requirements for a High School Diploma or a High School Certificate of Program Completion.

Eligibility

When a student **with a disability turns 21 or 22 years of age** (depending on jurisdiction) or has completed the requirements for a High School Diploma or a High School Certificate of Program Completion **he/she is no longer entitled to services**. The **burden of receiving services shifts onto the young adult**. At this point they **must apply for services to see if they are ELIGIBLE to receive them**. This change in responsibility is at the heart of the transition process that happens when students go from being entitled to being eligible.
Common Transition Acronyms

DDA: Developmental Disability Administration
DORS: Division of Rehabilitation Services
DDS: Department on Disability Services
RSA: Rehabilitation Services Administration
CSB: Community Services Board
CCS: Coordinator of Community Services
DARS: Division of Aging and Rehabilitative Services
SSI: Supplemental Security Income
SSDI: Social Security Disability Income
TY: Transitioning Youth
MA: Maryland Medical Assistance or Medicaid
VR: Vocational Rehabilitation
DD: Developmental Disability
BHA: Behavioral Health Administration
CSLA: Community Support Living Arrangement
Telling your children about their diagnoses

Why you should tell your child:
- Knowledge is power
- They might already understand something is different about them or their situation
- Giving it a name gives them community; let them know they’re not alone
- Using autism as an excuse might indicate a need for accommodations
- Labels don’t cause stigma; self-knowledge can be a shield
- They have the right to know

How you can tell your child:
- Everyone has things that are easier for them and things that are harder for them. Everybody’s brain works differently. The way your brain works has a name and that name is autism. You’re autistic.
- Follow their lead
- Presume their competence; they might understand more than you realize but use simple age- and developmentally appropriate language
- Be positive or neutral; autism isn’t good or bad—it just is; it’s the way their brains work
- All autistic people aren’t the same
- Autism doesn’t go away
- It’s okay if they are unhappy with it; keep the conversation going
- Be direct and use simple language; check in with them to make sure they understand what you’re trying to say
- Continue the conversation in the months and years ahead

Suggested reading
- You Should Tell Your Kids That They’re Autistic:
  https://chavisory.wordpress.com/2013/11/01/you-should-tell-your-kids-that-theyre-autistic/
- Welcome to the Autistic Community:
  http://autisticadvocacy.org/2014/02/welcome-to-the-autistic-community/
- Aspie Like Me: A Diagnosis Story:
  http://www.stimeyland.com/2012/06/aspie-like-me-diagnosis-story/
- My 7-year-old Knows He Has Autism:

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Parent Resources/Training

Pacer Center – Champions for Children with Disabilities http://www.pacer.org/transition

- Parent and information training center-Provides information on resources, support and training for parents of children with disabilities

The National Youth Transitions Center http://thenytc.org/

- A collaborative organization of local and national agencies that support youth and young people with disabilities as they enter adulthood and the world of work. Members provide and share information related to the promotion of youth advocacy and inclusive employment opportunities

“I’m Determined “ Project: http://www.imdetermined.org/

- Project provided through the Virginia Department of Education
- Provides tips and strategies for parents to teach their child self-determined behaviors. Topics include self-directed IEP, self-advocacy, goal setting

Advocacy Support

The Parent’s Place of Maryland http://www.ppmd.org/resources/library/

- Maryland’s Parent Training and Information Center provides resources and information about the special education process and parent rights
- Family-to-Family Health Information Center provides resources and information to access community, school, and family support services to help their child in school and at home

DC Quality Trust http://www.dccqualitytrust.org/

- Provides advocacy support services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families

National Disabilities Rights Network http://www.ndrn.org/

- Provides free legal advice to assist individuals with disabilities and their family access inclusive educational programs, financial entitlements, healthcare, accessible housing and productive employment opportunities. Click on individual links for assistance in MD, VA, or DC
  - http://disabilityrightsmd.org/ - Disability Rights Maryland (formerly Maryland Disability Law Center)
  - http://www.dlcv.org/ - disAbility Law Center for Virginia
  - http://www.uls-dc.org/PAP.htm - University Legal Services Protection and Advocacy Program for the District of Columbia
Transition Planning

Maryland Transitioning Youth http://mdtransition.org/

- Provides links to information related to transition planning, college, employment healthcare, transportation and other additional resources

OSSE Secondary Transition http://www.ossesecondarytransition.org/

- Similar to mdtransition.org, this site provides transition planning information for students who reside in the District of Columbia


- Provides support, information and resources designed to improve the outcomes of students with disabilities in transition from middle / secondary education to postsecondary education and employment.

Virginia Wizard: https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/home

- Assists Virginia students think about and plan for postsecondary education options

DCTransition http://dctransition.org/

- Designed to answer questions and help DC young adults plan for their future


- Planning guide to assist students and families prepare to transition from school to adulthood. Information guides include self-advocacy, independent living skills, health, post-secondary education options, housing, and employment; also provides links to resources and transition timelines specific to each state

Local/Non-public School System Resources

MCPS Transition Services: http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/special-education/programs-services/transition-services-unit

DCPS Transition Services: https://dcpstransition.com/

Fairfax Count Transition Services: https://www.fcps.edu/academics/academic-overview/special-education-instruction/career-and-transition-services

Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities: http://mansef.org/
Federal Programs:

Selective Service Registration: https://www.sss.gov


Postsecondary Employment/Adult Services

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/Youth http://www.ncwd-youth.info

- information about employment and youth with disabilities related to disability, education, employment, and workforce development

Vocational Rehabilitation

- Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS): www.dors.maryland.gov
- Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS): www.dars.virginia.gov
- DC Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA): http://dds.dc.gov/service/vocational-rehabilitation-services

Long Term Developmental Disability Support

- Maryland Developmental Disability Administration http://dda.dhmh.maryland.gov/
- DC Developmental Disability Administration http://dds.dc.gov/service/services-people-idd
- Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/

Postsecondary Education/Training

Think College http://www.thinkcollege.net/

- Information on college programs for students with intellectual disabilities

Heath Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center https://heath.gwu.edu/

- National clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities-Click on their Resources tab leading to Secondary Transition to Postsecondary Website Portals to further Resources
Recreation programs:

Potomac Community Resources: http://pcr-inc.org/

Spirit Club: http://spirit-club.com/

Special Olympics:
- Maryland: http://www.somd.org/
- DC: http://specialolympicsdc.org/
- VA: http://specialolympicsva.org/

Best Buddies: https://bestbuddies.org/

Camp Atlantic: http://www.campatlantic.org/

Camp Greentop: http://www.leagueforpeople.org/programs-services/camping-recreation

KEEN: http://www.keengreaterdc.org/

Melwood: https://www.melwood.org/recreation/

Local County Therapeutic Recreation programs
- Fairfax County: http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/trs/
- Montgomery County: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/thingstodo/therapeutic/
- Prince George's County: http://www.pgparks.com/Things_To_Do/Individuals_with_Disabilities
- DC: http://dpr.dc.gov/service/therapeutic-recreation
10 Steps to Independence

Promoting Self-Determination in the Home

Adolescents need to learn to make choices and decisions, and this may be more important for adolescents who have a disability.

The road leading to a successful transition from childhood to adulthood begins much earlier than the teenage years. It starts when children learn about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses and, in so doing, begin to value themselves. It ends when, as adults, these same children can take control over choices and decisions, which impact their lives and take responsibility for their actions. This is called self-determination.

Children learn many of the attitudes and abilities leading to self-determination by watching their families. Here are 10 ways that the family can play a critical role in teaching their son or daughter to be self-determined.

1. **Allow your son or daughter to explore his or her world.** This may mean biting your lip and watching from the kitchen window when your child first meets the neighbor's kids, instead of running out to supervise. While there are obvious limits, all parents have to "let go", and it is never easy.

2. **Children need to learn that what they say or do is important and can have influence on others.** This involves allowing risk-taking and exploration. Encourage your child to ask questions and express opinions. Involvement in family discussions and decision-making sessions is one way of providing this opportunity to learn.

3. **Self-worth and self-confidence are critical factors in the development of self-determination.** Model your own sense of positive self-esteem to your child. Tell your child that she is important by spending time with her. Again, involve her in family activities and in family decisions.

4. **Don't run away from questions from your child about differences related to his disability.** That doesn't mean, however, to focus on the negative side of the condition. Stress that everyone is an individual, encourage your child's unique abilities, and help him to accept unavoidable limitations.

5. **Recognize the process of reaching goals don't just emphasize outcomes.** Children need to learn to work toward goals. For older children, encourage skills like organization and goal setting by modeling these behaviors. Make lists or hang a marker board in the laundry room, which shows the daily schedule for each family member. Talk about the steps you are going to use to complete the task and involve them in tasks leading to family goals, such as planning for a vacation.
10 Steps to Independence

6. **Schedule opportunities for interactions with children of different ages and backgrounds.** This could be in daycare centers, schools, churches, and when playing in the neighborhood. Start early in finding chances for your son or daughter to participate in activities that help all children realize everyone is unique.

7. **Set realistic but ambitious expectations.** The adage that goals should extend just beyond our reach is true here. Take an active role in your child's education experience. Be familiar with his or her reading ability and identify books that provide enough challenge to move to the next reading level. Be sure you don't assume that all of the progress should occur at school.

8. **Allow your child to take responsibility for her own actions...successes and failures!** Provide valid reasons for doing things instead of simply saying, "because I said so!" Providing explanations provides the opportunity for the child to make an activity his own.

9. **Don't leave choice-making opportunities to chance.** Take every opportunity to allow your child to make choices; what she wears, what is served for dinner, or where the family goes on vacation. And, although this is not always practical or possible, make sure that these choice opportunities are meaningful. For example, for most children choosing between broccoli and cauliflower is not a choice! Also, when offering choices, make sure that the child's decision is honored.

10. **Provide honest, positive feedback. Focus on the behavior or task that needs to be changed.** Don't make your child feel like a failure. For example, if your son or daughter attempts to complete a school activity, say a math sheet, but is unable to do so, phrase the feedback so that he or she knows that the failure was specific to the worksheet and not in him or her. We all learn from our mistakes, but only if they are structured so that they don not lead us to believe that the problem is within us.

Adapted from Sharon Davis, Ph.D. and Michael Wehmeyer, Ph.D.