

# Expecting a Bright Future

**Growing Towards Employment and Future Success**



**Planning for our Sons and Daughters with Disabilities**

# Parent Expectations

## SETTING THE BAR HIGH

As a parent, you know the best and unique strengths of your child. Family support plays an important role in your child's ability to be successful in school, work, and in their daily life. When parents have high academic and employment expectations for their children with disabilities, the children experience greater success in those critical areas.



**It is critical for parents to have high expectations for their child with disabilities. Children often see their own potential through the vision created by their parents.**

Having high expectations at an early age and throughout your child's school years will increase his or her employment success.

### **Did you know:**

- **Employers are hiring more people with disabilities**
- **Employers are providing additional job opportunities for people with disabilities**
- **Employers are seeing the benefits of hiring people with disabilities because of the unique skills they bring to the workplace**
- **People with disabilities have more job options because of advances in technology**
- **Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations in the workplace**

# Benefits of Employment

## WHY SHOULD YOUR CHILD WORK?

Financial success can be a crucial force in helping individuals feel better about themselves, feel secure, become involved in their community and have an optimistic attitude about the future.

You can help your child learn about the benefits of working and how to be independent. A parent can influence a child at a young age to understand why work is important.

### Did you know:

- Having a job provides a person with a feeling of self-respect, dignity, and self-worth
- It provides a person with more money to pay for things on his or her own
- Earning money for a skill makes a person feel good
- A job allows a person to contribute to the community and create relationships with people at work
- Having a job decreases health problems



*Take advantage of opportunities like Career Mentoring Day in your area, where youth can job shadow in their career of interest. It's a great way to find out about jobs from the inside and for local employers to learn about youth.*

*You never know, it may even end up with a job offer.*

# Employer Expectations

## WHAT DO EMPLOYERS NEED?

Focusing on your child's strengths and talents, you can help your child to meet the skills that employers expect from all their employees.

### Did you know:

- The number one expectation an employer has for an employee is to have strong "soft skills", for example:
  - Dependable
  - Trustworthy
  - Self-motivated
  - Willing to learn
  - On time
  - Respectable
  - Positive attitude
- A person with skills and a strong work ethic will be more valuable to an employer
- Employers want someone to fulfill the essential duties of the job
- Employers want employees with a certain level of education and experience, but they are willing to train the person on specific job tasks



*"I believe students with disabilities should learn life-skills (chores, laundry, medical needs, etc.) just like their peers without disabilities at home.*

*Access to the general education curriculum, is far more important, in preparing all students, for life after graduation. Meeting deadlines, being on time, working with peers, etc., have natural consequences when they are not met. Putting a child with a disability in a fantasy environment and expecting them to learn employment skills by having a "goal" is not how kids learn."*

*~ Idaho Parent*

## HOW YOUR CHILD'S SKILLS AND TALENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORKPLACE

*As a parent, you know best the unique strengths your child possesses. Focus on those strengths and talents and help him develop skills based on those strengths. Think creatively about how your child's strengths can make him an asset for an employer.*

*You can help an employer see how your child's unique skills and talents can contribute to their business.*

*Everybody has skills and talents that will benefit an employer.*

### Did you know:

- There is a process called "Discovery" that can help identify your child's strengths, skills, and talents, and how these can benefit employers
- These strengths, skills, and talents can be identified early and practiced at home and in the community to reach long-term employment goals
- One good place to practice and gain experience is through volunteer jobs or in summer work experiences where skills are learned by doing different tasks

The *Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation* (IDVR) offers Pre-Employment Transition Services to students when they are ready to start planning life after high school and they recommend this happen before the start of their junior year. IDVR can provide students with many opportunities to learn the skills employers expect of their employees through interactive experiences in the community.

Learn more online at: <https://vr.idaho.gov/>



## GETTING CREATIVE ABOUT ABILITIES

Employers are sometimes willing to make adjustments to the job description for a person when they see the value the individual brings to the workplace and how it will increase their business bottom line. Talk to the business owner. You will probably find out about the kinds of things that need to be done in that business, or better yet, what is not getting done but very needed. The key is to show how your son or daughter's skills and abilities fill that need. A visual portfolio of their past experience and/or demonstration of skills is one good way to do that.

***Often, with small adjustments or putting simple accommodations in place, a person can get the job done.***



*Reid was very honest during the interview for the job about the things he could do and the things he wasn't sure he could do but was willing to learn. Although we felt the interview went well, we didn't think they would offer him a job because the tasks he mentioned didn't exactly fit the current job openings at the restaurant.*

*The manager called a few days later saying they had created a position for him that included the tasks he had described. She said that because he presented himself so positively, seemed eager to work for Sizzler, and willing to learn new tasks she felt he would be a valuable asset to the restaurant.*

*~ Idaho Parent*

*In the past two years while Spencer has worked at North 40 Outfitters he has been a tremendous employee. He has a strong work ethic and is very punctual. He has evolved into an employee that understands the rules and expectations of working at North 40 Outfitters.*

*The best thing about Spencer is how he has learned to interact in a professional yet pleasant manner with both customers and coworkers. He has a great future in retail!*

*~ Idaho Employer*



## What about Benefits?

***Many parents are concerned that encouraging their child to work and earn an income will affect their child's eligibility for needed public benefits such as Social Security and Medicaid.***

Earning wages over a certain monthly limit can affect the amount of Social Security Income you receive, but if you really look at the numbers - **you are always better off working.**

There are many myths about losing your benefits or become ineligible if you work. In Idaho, you can earn more than \$38,000 a year and still be eligible for SSI. Plus, there are many work incentives in the program that most people don't know about, including ways to keep Medicaid.

Go to the Idaho Department of Labor website and YouTube page to watch videos and learn more at <https://www.youtube.com/user/IdahoDeptofLabor> -----

Scroll down on the page to the six animated videos:

1. What is Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
2. SSI & Work
3. SSI & Youth Who Work
4. What is Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
5. SSDI & Planning for Work
6. SSDI Work Incentives



# On the Road to Success

## PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD AS THEY GROW UP

It is important to learn about the resources available in your community to support your child in adult life. If your son/daughter will need them, start making the connections to adult services/agencies even when your child is at a young age. It may seem strange to begin making connections or having conversations about adult services early in your child's life, but this is a part of the natural transition that occurs year to year.

### Did you know:

- **Adult disability programs require a person with a disability to complete an application and must meet eligibility criteria to receive services**
- **The process to determine if a person meets disability eligibility criteria can take a long time**
- **There are different rules for health care funding options for adults than for children**
- **Some adult service agencies have long waiting lists so making those connections and applications while a student is still in school can help make sure they continue to have the support they need to find employment and be active in the community**



*Adam works at the Meridian Marshall's store. He invited his State Senator, Fred Martin, to visit him at his workplace for the Take Your Legislator to Work event.*

If your child will need services and supports paid for by Medicaid as an adult, it is important to learn how to apply for adult Medicaid service programs early. Each program has different eligibility criteria and kinds of supports available. You can learn more on the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare website under Adult Disability Services or contact your local Medicaid office. <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/DevelopmentalDisabilities/AdultDDCareManagement/tabid/211/Default.aspx>

Idaho has a program that allows an employed person with a disability to continue to get needed Medicaid benefits. That program is called **Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities**: <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/Medicaid/MedicaidforWorkerswithDisabilities/tabid/1917/Default.aspx>

## TEACHING SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS

As a parent, you are the most important person in teaching self-advocacy skills to your child. Self-advocacy is knowing how to speak up for yourself, make decisions about your own life, know your rights and responsibilities, and learn how to get information or ask for help when needed.

### Did you know:

- The most important first step is to help your child understand not only their strengths but also their needs related to their disability. Help your son/daughter define the kind of support that works best for them and the things that help them do their best in school or at work
- It is important for a person with a disability to be able to advocate for his or her needs when at work, including asking for needed accommodations
- A great place to practice self-advocacy is at the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting
  - Teaching and practicing self-advocacy starts at an early age
  - Teaching self-advocacy helps a child to know his or her responsibility in developing skills that will help them to be employed



Strategies and resources for parents to use in helping their son or daughter develop self-determination skills can be found on the *Parents* page of the ***I'm Determined*** website at: <http://www.imdetermined.org/parents>

# Roles and Responsibilities

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Once your child reaches high school age, and hopefully sooner, it becomes very important for you, your child, and the school to work together to devise a plan (individual education plan – IEP) that outlays the best course of action for your child regarding his education and employment opportunities.

***The most important thing to remember is to base much of the plan on the unique strengths, abilities, and talents of your child and always maintain the goal at its highest level.***

When having a job is your child's goal, ensure that she has as many work experiences as possible with exposure to many different job settings. Summer jobs are a great way for youth to gain valuable work experiences.

You play an important role in the transition of your child and knowing the roles and responsibilities of those who can help you. Teachers, adult agencies, community, employers, and family can create opportunities for your child's employment.



### Did you know:

- Teachers must provide transition activities for your child based on individual goals your child has about his or her future (this begins when your child turns 16)
- Some agencies can begin providing services to a child at age 16, for example Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Labor
- Community organizations and activities can help your child to learn soft skills and participate in work experiences
- Employers, supervisors, and co-workers can help a person with disabilities be more independent in the workplace
- Family is the center of support for your child's future job and ongoing employment

The **Idaho Department of Labor** can offer support for youth ages 16 and up on their road to employment. Learn more online at: <http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/idl/youthservices.aspx> and check out their newly updated publication - *Willing and Able: A Job Hunting Guide for Idahoans with Disabilities* at: [http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/Willing\\_and\\_Able.pdf](http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/Willing_and_Able.pdf)

Check out Idaho's disability and employment resource website at:  
<http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/JobSeekers/AbleToWork.aspx>



*Our sons and daughters need to know that they can strive for a job, have support to achieve employment, and a life that brings fulfillment. Many employers are learning that people of differing abilities add a valuable dynamic to their work environment. Being actively involved in the community not only gives students exposure to job possibilities, but gives business and organizations exposure to future employees.*

*~ Idaho Parent*



Your daughter has gifts to contribute.

Your son has abilities.

Our sons and daughters can work.

IDAHO <sup>1<sup>ST</sup></sup>  
employment

An Initiative of the Idaho Council  
on Developmental Disabilities

*Often a person with a disability is the right person for the job.*