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*South Dakota Parent  
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newsletter (weConnect)  
with current events and  
time-sensitive information.*

# Circuit

Offering information and assistance to parents and families  
caring for children with a disability or special need.



## What Parents Should Know... About Preparing Youth for Employment

## Making the Most of High School Programming

**By Dr. Wendy Parent-Johnson, Ph.D., CRC, CESP  
Executive Director  
USD Sanford School of Medicine Center for Disabilities**

Your son or daughter is getting ready to graduate from high school. What an exciting time, full of hopes and dreams for a happy, productive, and quality adult life filled with work, community, friends, and activities. Let's turn the clock back and re-visit the many things throughout your child's life that make this outcome possible.

First, we need to remember that the process for achieving this big transition starts early. It is a coordinated set of activities that is future driven and outcome oriented. That means having high expectations as a child with a long range post-school vision in mind. The Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process should include an employment or post-secondary goal with each annual IEP outlining the steps for achieving it.

It is important to create every opportunity to be exposed to work starting in the elementary years and continuing throughout their education. For example, completing chores at home, talking about places that you visited in terms of what jobs people are doing and what it would be like to work there, asking your child what he or she would like to be when they grow up, and promoting a strong work ethic.

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# Making the Most of High School Programming

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At the same time, your child's school can provide experiences that have been found to be effective in promoting employment outcomes.

Exploring jobs and careers through websites, talking to different people, visiting businesses in the community, and participating in job shadow, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities can help students learn about different job requirements and what is important to them in a job. The Job Observational Self-Assessment Form is a useful tool to assist individuals themselves with communicating what they like and don't like about the workplace, the people, the job duties, and the overall job (*Parent & Wehman, 2011*).

Participating in real work experiences while in school is a critical factor contributing to post-school employment. A good rule of thumb is to think about providing a range of opportunities early on and moving to a more specific area as your child moves closer to graduating. Remember this is a time of exploration so consider offering a variety of different types of jobs and settings. It is essential that these be representative of real jobs in the community with similar demands and expectations, providing a chance for your child to learn new things and understand what is expected of them as an employee and coworker in a real business. This is the time to teach job tasks, social skills, and work-related behaviors such as taking a break, interacting with coworkers, handling down time, and asking the supervisor questions. Identifying how your son or daughter learns best, what kinds of supports they like and are effective, and addressing any challenging issues on the job site is an important contribution towards permanent paid employment.



*Jacob Joy of Miller wants to be a chef. He recently spent time helping the chef at Joy Ranch cook for a crowd.*

## Promote Self-determination

Similarly, promoting self-determination is a skill set that will benefit your son or daughter in all aspects of his or her life. They need to learn to believe in themselves — to believe in their own capacity to get things done. Self-determination skills contribute to improved outcomes in all facets of one's life. Providing opportunities for your child to set goals, make decisions, problem solve, and direct events in his or her life are invaluable. Remember it is not all or nothing, encourage your child to learn these skills frequently over time with increased responsibility and support.

An often overlooked element in transition is the business community. It is important to be familiar with the local labor market and hiring needs. In addition, finding out what business are looking for in an employee and providing instruction to prepare students for employment can insure we are focusing efforts on those attributes valued by employers. Developing business relationships and utilizing personal and community connections are critical in the job development and hiring process.

Remember that all of these experiences collectively contribute to the identification of the features essential for making a good job match. In every context and situation — try to operate from a “strengths-based” perspective. Find out what your child likes and doesn't like, their interests and preferences, and the types of supports that are desired and helpful to share with the school or adult

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service personnel who will be responsible for pursuing employment. Think about the specifics, such as different environmental characteristics, such as loud or quiet, fast-paced or slow, close proximity or independent of coworkers, as this richness is often overlooked despite its benefit in distinguishing the setting, in addition to job type, that is the best match for your son or daughter. As linkages with adult services including vocational rehabilitation, developmental disability services, and community support providers are made, the sharing of information gathered is a critical piece for facilitating employment and insuring that the many features important to your son or daughter are not lost in the process.

So now your child is graduating. Remember anything is possible if we don't lose sight of our dreams, maintain our high expectations, operate from a perspective of what does it take, work together, think creatively, and provide essential services and supports to turn those dreams into a reality.

## Just Getting Started? Parents and Youth Can...

### Identify passions, skills, likes and dislikes...

Think beyond the school day. Are there extra curricular clubs or activities that interest your youth? What are the chores they may have at home or for family members (childcare, cleaning, laundry, lawn mowing, repairs, painting, etc.), volunteer experiences, hobbies, church and/or community activities? What, specifically, does the young person like/dislike about certain activities? For instance, do they prefer routine, repetitive activities or a variety of tasks? Do they prefer physically active or sedentary tasks? Do they prefer working independently or with others? Do they prefer quiet or active environments?

Self-confidence comes from opportunities to be successful, and it generally takes more than one attempt to achieve success. If youth are not yet engaged in chores, hobbies, volunteer work, or activities at school or in the community, now is the time to begin.

### Explore jobs that connect to identified interests and skills...

Utilize networks in school, the community, and through family and friends to visit with individuals in fields of interest to learn more, tour a business, or participate in a job shadow or volunteer experience. Students can research jobs and required skills, training, and education; attend job fairs or career exploration events. There are generally many diverse job opportunities related to a specific career interest, don't focus narrowly on a specific job title.

### Gain work experience...

Temporary jobs, summer jobs, and part-time jobs all provide valuable work experiences. One of the most important findings from the research shows that work experiences for youth with disabilities during high school (paid or unpaid) help them acquire jobs at higher wages after they graduate (*Colley & Jamison, 1998*).



**CareerOneStop** — A source for employment information and inspiration.

[www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/SelfAssessments/FindAssessments.asp](http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/SelfAssessments/FindAssessments.asp)

**Drive of Your Life** — A fun online career exploration game that helps middle-school and high school students learn more about themselves, higher education and careers.

<https://www.driveofyourlife.org/launch.html>

# Aim High, Start Early in Expectations for Your Child With Special Needs

By Elaine Roberts

Executive Director, South Dakota Parent Connection

High Expectations—these words are tossed out by professionals, parents and in grant proposals, as it relates to children with special needs. *Webster's Dictionary* defines expectation as a belief that someone will or should achieve something. "Students had high expectations for their future." Too often, we place limitations on what we can expect our child with special needs to know and be able to do as we work our way through many systems. And...those who work with our children can limit our planning and dreaming for the future as well.

South Dakota Parent Connection's recent application for the Parent Training and Information Center grant included addressing this priority:

Provide high-quality services that increase parents' capacity to help their children with disabilities improve their early learning, school-aged, and postsecondary outcomes. To meet this requirement the applicant must include information as to how the services will increase parents' knowledge of the nature of their children's disabilities, including their children's strengths, and academic, behavioral, and developmental challenges and the importance of having high expectations for their children and how to help them meet those expectations.

What does having high expectations for your son or daughter with disabilities look like? What can parents do to help their child and others who support him/her to have high expectations? What does it mean to be a valued member of a community?



Having expectations requires teaching and supporting our children to gain responsibility — believing that everyone can contribute to family, school and community life. Beginning at a young age, teach self-care skills, helping others, taking turns. Yes it may take longer to get those socks on the first time but continue to have that expectation and progress will be made. Have your child help you—put dirty dishes in the sink, put away toys, take dirty clothes to hamper. Model responsibility; use the words "We can do this and here's how." Use praise and avoid rewards. Accept approximations—a five-year old's bed making skills may not match your own but with practice and age your child will improve. Provide structure and routine. Consistency in having expectations is important for you and your child. When others tell you what your child can't do, remember to share what they can do and continue to move forward.

At the recent Lighting the Way – ASD in our Community Conference, Dr. Paul Wehman, Virginia Commonwealth University, talked about the importance of having the expectation that our children with disabilities can and should be encouraged to think about and plan for employment as a life goal. The planning cannot wait until high school; it begins early on. He shared with parents the importance of starting early with toilet training and self-care. Research has shown that gaining these skills can help a child with special needs make gains in other areas of their learning. Pay attention to developmental milestones and expect and support your child in continued growth at every age.

Continued research and use of evidence based practices are allowing more youth and adults with special needs to be employed and live independent lives. That does not happen by accident — it takes believing in the potential of our children and teaching and supporting them in ways that lead to being involved in and a valued member of their community.

# Providing Practical Hands-On Experiences

## Project Skills

Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and the local school districts. Rehabilitation Services provides funding for wages, FICA, worker's compensation and other costs. The local school district provides matching funds through development, job coaching and on-site monitoring.

Project Skills provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach. Project Skills will help to build the student's work history, references and help them move into different and better jobs as they mature and are ready to take on new challenges.



Kelsey Peterson is a student at West Central High School and participated in Project Skills at two jobs during the 2013-14 school year. "These were my first real jobs," said Kelsey. "At Augustana I was working around big crowds and I don't like big crowds. The first day, was nerve-racking being in the middle of all those people, but I learned to adjust and started to like it there. Both jobs were a good learning experience and I would recommend Project Skills."

Kelsey also learned to navigate the mass transit system while working two jobs. "I can read any bus schedule now."

Kelsey's success at SDPC translated into a summer job as an office assistant. She is planning to move on the Project SEARCH program next fall.

## Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities. Students who want to work have the chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The goal of the Project SEARCH program is competitive employment for each intern. Designed as an internship program, Project SEARCH affords students the opportunity to put employability skills into practice. For five days a week, students report to the host business and learn employability skills in the classroom and job skills while participating in targeted internships.

Project SEARCH was established in 1996 at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and currently there are over 200 Project SEARCH sites. In South Dakota, the first Project SEARCH programs started in August 2010, with host sites at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls and Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen. In August 2013, South Dakota State University in Brookings became the third host site in South Dakota.

During Project SEARCH, the students receive support with accommodations, adaptations, and on-the-job coaching. Students who have completed all academic requirements for graduation from high school may apply for enrollment in Project SEARCH. Participants referred by the school district are typically 18 to 21 years old. In addition to serving students from the school districts, the Division of Rehabilitation Services may also refer individuals who have "aged out" of the secondary school system up to age 25 years old, if additional slots are available at a host site.

The internships are typically 10 to 12 weeks in length. Students are matched to the most appropriate job site based on interests and skills. A job coach works with the student until the tasks assigned can be performed independently. The time and instruction is individualized. Students are evaluated by the job coach, the instructor and the department supervisor. Job placement is the final goal of the program. Students can be employed after the first semester of the school year and continue in Project SEARCH.

To learn more about these programs contact your local Rehabilitation Services office.

# Healthy and Ready to Work

Lack of attention to health needs and health management can jeopardize even the best developed plans to reach goals for post high school education/training, achieving the job of choice, and living as independently as possible while fully participating in the community.

As parents, we have been responsible for protecting the health of our son/daughter: making sure they have insurance; finding providers; making appointments and providing transportation; talking to care providers; picking up and administering meds (or giving reminders). It is often faster and easier to do it ourselves, and we can remove some of the fear that our son/daughter will mismanage their health. But if we want to support the growing autonomy that is appropriate for their peer group, increase their ability to successfully engage with others to maintain their own health and well-being, and allow youth to develop confidence and competence to support their overall health — **TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE** — parents must provide opportunities for youth to practice these skills.

Successful health care transition includes:

- **Transition from child-focused to adult-focused providers.** Pediatric providers are family-centered and have a developmental perspective. Adult providers are person-centered and have a disease prevention focus. Adult providers include medical, mental, dental, vision, and hearing health professionals.
- **Young adults taking charge of their own health.** Youth can begin making appointments; arranging transportation; making their own refill orders and arranging for pickup or delivery; understanding their medical condition/history; recognizing when they may be having a medical emergency and having an emergency plan in place; communicating directly with providers; advocating if they need interpreters; understanding their insurance or how payment will be made; and participating in the selection of their adult provider(s) that will offer a quality provider/youth “fit,” accepts insurance/payment method, provides a facility that is accessible, provides needed accommodations, and respects culture of youth/family including decisions regarding care and level of family involvement.
- **Insurance coverage for age 19 and beyond.** Develop a health insurance plan for age 19 and beyond. Contact SD Parent Connection if assistance is needed in identifying options to maintain medical, mental, dental, and vision health insurance.
- **Getting needed services and supports to achieve goals.** Identify needed supports (home health care, durable medical equipment, assistive technology, modifications for accessibility, medical supplies, etc.), available providers, and payment options. Contact SD Parent Connection if assistance is needed in identifying options.



## Your Amazon Purchases Can Support SDPC

If you shop at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), you can now support SDPC. Join the Amazon Smiles Program and select SD Parent Connection as the non-profit you want your Amazon patronage to support. SDPC will receive .5% of the Amazon purchase price as a charitable gift.

Thank You!

# Marketplace Health Insurance Information

The Health Insurance Marketplace works to provide affordable quality health insurance to families. For most individuals, the open enrollment period for the Marketplace ended March 31, 2014. The next opportunity for enrollment begins on November 15 and continues through February 15.

However, those who experience certain life changes may not have to wait that long. Applying to the Marketplace within 60 days of a life event may qualify a consumer for tax credits and possible cost reductions for out-of-pocket medical expenses, such as deductibles and co-pays no matter the time of year. The complete list of eligible life events can be found at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) website, but here are some qualifying events

- Lost health insurance due to losing job-based coverage, divorce, the end of an individual policy plan year in 2014, COBRA expiration, or aging off a parent's plan.
- Lost eligibility for Medicaid or CHIP, and similar circumstances. Important: Voluntarily ending coverage doesn't qualify you for a special enrollment period. Neither does losing coverage that doesn't qualify as minimum essential coverage.
- Had a change in income or household status that affects eligibility for premium tax credits or cost-sharing reductions if you are already enrolled in Marketplace coverage.
- Gained status as member of an Indian tribe. Members of federally recognized Indian tribes can sign up for or change plans once per month throughout the year.
- Got married, had a baby, adopted a child or placed a child for adoption or foster care.
- Moved your residence to a different state, gained U.S. citizenship, or left incarceration.

If you think you may qualify for a **special enrollment period**, start a Marketplace application on [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). When you finish your application and get to your "To-do list" page, you'll see a statement that you can enroll only if you have a Special Enrollment Period. Continue the process and enroll in a plan. If you need application assistance, contact a local Marketplace Navigator, or call 1-855-371-4987. This assistance is free of charge.

**Grow SD:** Carla Burns, 416 Production St. N. Aberdeen; 626-2565; [carlas@midco.net](mailto:carlas@midco.net); *servicing Beadle, Brown, Campbell, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Marshall, McPherson, Potter, Roberts, Spink, Stanley, Sully, and Walworth counties.*

**ICAP (Interlakes Community Action Program):** Emily Gross, 505 N. Western, Sioux Falls; 334-2808 Ext. 204; [egross@interlakescap.com](mailto:egross@interlakescap.com); *servicing rural Minnehaha and Sioux Falls.*

**ICAP:** Kim Jones; 601 4th St., Suite 108 Brookings; 692-6391; [kjones@interlakescap.com](mailto:kjones@interlakescap.com); *servicing Lake, and Moody counties.*

**ICAP:** Barb Ketcham; Turner County Courthouse, Parker; [bketcham@interlakescap.com](mailto:bketcham@interlakescap.com); *servicing Lincoln, McCook, and Turner counties.*

**ICAP:** Sue Koistinen; 101 2nd St. SE, DeSmet; 854-3701; [skoistinen@interlakescap.com](mailto:skoistinen@interlakescap.com); *servicing Hamlin, Kingsbury, and Miner counties.*

**ICAP:** Cindy Ram; 7 8th Ave. SE Watertown; 886-7674; [craml@interlakescap.com](mailto:craml@interlakescap.com); *servicing Codington, Clark, Deuel, and Grant counties.*

**ICAP:** Peggy Pederson; 601 4th St., Suite 108, Brookings; 692-639; [ppederson@interlakescap.com](mailto:ppederson@interlakescap.com); *servicing Brookings County.*

**ROCS:** Lizzy Bolander, Lizzy; PO Box 70, Lake Andes; 487-7634; [lbolander@rocsinc.org](mailto:lbolander@rocsinc.org); *servicing Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Clay, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Sanborn, Todd, Tripp, Union, and Yankton counties.*

**WSDCAP:** Linda Edel; 1844 Lombardy Drive, Rapid City; 348-1460; [wsdcap@rapidcity.com](mailto:wsdcap@rapidcity.com); *servicing Bennett, Butte, Custer, Corson, Dewey, Fall River, Haakon, Harding, Jackson, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Shannon, and Ziebach counties.*

**WSDCAP:** Michael Robeck; 1844 Lombardy Drive, Rapid City; 348-1460; [mrobeck@wsdca.org](mailto:mrobeck@wsdca.org); *servicing Rapid City.*



3701 West 49th Street, Suite 102  
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### SIoux FALLS OFFICE

3701 W. 49 Street  
Suite 102  
Sioux Falls, SD 57106  
605.361.3171  
800.640.4553  
Fax: 605.361.2928

### RAPID CITY OFFICE

Children's Care  
7110 Jordan Drive  
Rapid City, SD 57702  
605.348.0305  
Fax: 605.348.2770

## Employment Assistance Resources

**Career Learning Centers** — Provides education and employment training. [http://dlr.sd.gov/workforce\\_training/clcs.aspx](http://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_training/clcs.aspx). • Call 605-773-3101.

**Disability Employment Initiative** — DEI staff in the South Dakota Department of Labor are available to help young adults with disabilities (ages 18-24) find employment. For local SD Department of Labor and Regulation offices, visit <http://dlr.sd.gov/localoffices/default.aspx> • Call 605-773-3101

**National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability** — This website looks specifically at what youth with disabilities need to know to prepare themselves for careers or meaningful jobs, and what parents need to know to ensure that their children are getting all of the things they need to succeed. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info>

- Helping Youth Build Work Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families
- Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families (article + podcast)
- Tapping into the Power of Families: How Families of Youth with Disabilities Can Assist in Job Search and Retention
- Understanding the New Vision for Career Development: The Role of Family
- *Guideposts*: Can help steer families, institutions and youth themselves through the transition process. [www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts).

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services** — A program that provides individualized vocational rehabilitation and supportive services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to get and keep jobs compatible with their skills and abilities. <http://dhs.sd.gov/drs/vocrehab/vr.aspx> • Call 605-773-3195

**Workplace Flexibility Toolkit** — Provides employees, job seekers, employers, policymakers and researchers with information, resources and a unique approach to workplace flexibility. Searchable by type of resource, target audience, types of workplace flexibility (place, time, task). [www.dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/workplaceflexibility/)