



Thurston/Mason County Developmental Disabilities High School Transition 101



What is “High School Transition?”

High School Transition (HST) refers to the programs and services available in the public education system for students ages 14-21 with developmental/intellectual disabilities to help in the transition from school-based supports to preparing for adult life after graduation. Some examples of transition services offered within schools include: **life skills instruction** (cooking, laundry, cleaning, basic personal hygiene), **employment readiness skills** (interviewing, resume and application writing, community-based volunteer opportunities), **independence and self-advocacy** (transportation options, time/schedule management, use of phones/computers for communication), as well as **individualized support services** (speech/communication, visual/auditory services, occupational/physical therapy).

High School Transition, or **Transition Planning**, is a multi-step process that includes: 1) school-based transition assessments that help identify a student’s interests and strengths; 2) developing appropriate and measurable post-secondary goals, such as continuing education, employment, and independent living; 3) identifying and creating an individualized transition service plan; 4) writing a relevant course of study; 5) providing referrals to and coordinating with adult service agencies; and 6) writing IEP goals to support a student’s post-secondary goals.

One of the main reasons **Transition Planning** is so important is that most adult support services are based on *eligibility*, not *entitlement* like services offered within the school setting. Many financial support services (such as DDA and SSI) require students to apply for or re-establish eligibility at age 18 based *on their own* income and resources. Service eligibility may also require that students/families submit updated evaluations and current adaptive assessments. It’s important for students and families to **keep copies of birth certificates, ID cards, Social Security Cards, and eligibility documentation** (disability diagnosis information, psychological evaluations, school-based assessments, etc.) and to **respond to requests from DDA, DVR, and SSI in a timely manner**. Another important thing to consider is that individuals automatically become their own legal guardian at age 18. Individual independence and autonomy are extremely important. Families with transition-aged students may want to discuss and research whether guardianship and/or another supported decision-making option is right for their student.

The High School Transition process seems extremely confusing. Is there an easy way to summarize what it is?

In a nutshell, High School Transition simply refers to the process of helping students and their families prepare and plan for life after school ends.

What can families and teachers do to help students prepare for graduation/transition?

Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17-18	Age 18	Age 18-21
<p>Submit applications to DDA/SSI (if not already completed)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Begin discussing student's long-term goals and Transition Planning in IEP meetings</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Request Assistive Technology (such as an iPad/tablet, communication software, hearing/visual devices, etc.) and necessary support services (including personal care and medical devices) through DDA or DSHS's Home and Community Services program</p>	<p>Submit applications to DDA/SSI (if not already completed)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Apply for a WA state ID card</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Ensure that student has a copy of his/her Social Security Card</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Request community providers/agencies begin attending IEP meetings to assist with transition planning</p>	<p>Submit applications to DDA/SSI (if not already completed)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Ensure student has ID and SS cards (these items will be required for employment)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Participate in transition information events</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Ask student's teacher for a referral to the Pre-Employment Training Services (Pre-ETS) through DVR</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Add employment, secondary education, recreation/social, and life goals to IEP's; request referrals to community agencies</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Consider student participation in summer internship programs</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Begin discussing supported decision-making options (such as guardianship and Durable Power of Attorney)</p>	<p>Submit applications to DDA/SSI (if not already completed)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Submit applications to Medicaid/Medicare for student as they turn age 18 (Medicaid eligibility is required for many DDA waiver services, such as supported employment and personal care)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>At age 17-17.5, begin the application process for supported decision-making options (such as guardianship and Durable Power of Attorney), if that is appropriate for your student/family</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Ask student's teacher to assist with applying for transportation services through Intercity Transit (such as Dial-a-Lift) or Mason Transit Authority (Dial-a-Ride)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Obtain information for specialized savings programs, such as Developmental Disabilities Endowment Trust Fund or ABLE Savings programs</p>	<p>Submit applications or re-establish eligibility for DDA/SSI (as of age 18 only the student's finances are considered)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Ask student's teacher about job programs and community-based employment opportunities</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Consider participation in self-advocacy and/or healthy relationships programs</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Discuss voter registration; review Selective Service registration requirements</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Discuss and research long-term care/ supported housing options, if interested</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Discuss student's anticipated graduation date and eligibility for entrance into a transition program with student's teacher</p>	<p>Submit applications to or re-establish eligibility for DDA/SSI (these services now consider only the student's income and resources)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Incorporate life/employment skills into IEP goals; develop plans for achieving these goals with student's teacher</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Encourage student independence in decision-making and self-advocacy</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Discuss anticipated graduation date and transition program attendance plans with student's teacher</p> <p>.....</p> <p>AGE 18-19: Ask about participation in the Job Foundations program</p> <p>.....</p> <p>AGE 19-20: Ask about participation in the School to Work program</p>

What role do different agencies play in the High School Transition process?

The goal of working with a high school transition planning team is to help students and families understand, connect with, apply for and navigate services that are available before and after graduation. Transition planning is truly a team approach, and each agency has a different role in the process. Some important transition team partners include:

- **County-based High School Transition Coordinator.** Funds and manages the Job Foundations and School to Work programs; assists students and families in applying for and navigating support programs including DVR, DDA, SSI, etc.; contracts with DDA, DVR and supported employment providers to deliver transition program services to students and young adults.
- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).** Provides the Pre-Employment Training Services (Pre-ETS) program to students ages 14-21; funds and participates as a planning partner in the School to Work program; state-wide resource agency that helps individuals of all ages with disabilities obtain and retain employment.
- **Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).** Funding partner in the Job Foundations, Supported Employment, Community Inclusion, and Supported Living programs; state-wide resource agency that provides case management and funding for services for individuals of all ages with developmental/intellectual disabilities.
- **Supported Employment Provider.** In partnership with the county, DVR, DDA, and school districts, provides training, job coaching, employment, and life enrichment programs to build self-sufficiency in individuals with disabilities. Supported employment providers that provide transition services in Thurston/Mason County include: Centerforce, EFI, Morningside, and Vadis.
- **Community Service Agencies.** Provide a myriad of services including family support programs, recreational opportunities, self-advocacy training, housing, transportation, etc.

What programs and services are available to high school-aged students to help prepare for adult life?

The following sections outline two county-funded programs that are currently available to High School Transition students in Thurston and Mason Counties: Job Foundations and School to Work.

There are also many other programs available to High School Transition students, including but not limited to:

- Pre-Employment Training Services (Pre-ETS) through DVR: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/pre-employment-transition-services-pre-ets>
- Vocational training programs, such as offered at New Market: <https://www.tumwater.k12.wa.us/nmsc>
- Post-secondary educational programs:
 - UW's DO-IT program <https://www.washington.edu/doit/>
 - WSU's ROAR program <https://education.wsu.edu/undergradprograms/wsuroar/>
 - OLS at Bellevue College <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/ols/>
 - South Puget Sound Community College, Youth Job Training Programs <https://spscc.edu/students/disability-services>
 - WorkSource/PacMountain <https://pacmtn.org/job-seekers/youth/>



Thurston/Mason County Developmental Disabilities Job Foundation Program



Overview

Job Foundations is a pilot program funded by the Thurston/Mason County DD department, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). It is designed to assist students in creating a plan for achieving their post-high school goals and improving post-graduation outcomes. During this program, a Job Foundation Report is developed by a job coach based on information and input from the student, family, teachers, school professionals, and any other key support members in the student's life. For students who are interested in working, Job Foundation provides a smooth transition into the School to Work program.

Program Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Job Foundations program, the student must meet the following criteria:

1. Be an active client with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).
2. Age 19-20 and enrolled in and actively attending their second year of a high school transition/life skills program in Thurston/Mason County.
3. Submit a signed application for the Job Foundations program to the Thurston/Mason County HST Coordinator, which includes a signed Consent to Share Information form.
4. Willing to meet regularly with their Job Foundations provider and actively engage in Job Foundations discovery activities.
5. Willing to apply for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).



Thurston/Mason County Developmental Disabilities School to Work Program



Overview

School to Work is a program that is funded by the Thurston/Mason County DD department and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). It is designed to assist eligible transition students in obtaining paid employment **prior** to exiting school, creating a smooth transition from school to work. This program uses a team-based planning approach that includes involvement of the student, student's family, high school transition teacher, a supported employment agency, the County High School Transition (HST) Coordinator and the assigned DVR Counselor.

Program Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the traditional School to Work program, the student must meet the following criteria:

1. Be an active client with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).
2. Age 20-21 and in their final year of a high school transition/life skills program in Thurston/Mason County.
3. Have obtaining a job a priority and be willing to actively engage in employment readiness/preparation activities.
4. Submit a signed application for the School to Work program to the Thurston/Mason County HST Coordinator, which includes a signed Consent to Share Information form.
5. Willing to apply for and participate in DVR activities, including regular School to Work employment team planning meetings.
6. Have a reliable transportation plan for traveling to and from internship/employment sites.

Additional Information

Funding for the School to Work program is limited and enrollment cannot be guaranteed. Other funding services and resources may be available for students who may not qualify for a traditional School to Work program. The transition team can work to help identify funding resources.