



**Greater Kansas City**  
**DiversAbility Guide**  
**to Success After High School**

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We all have **ability**.  
The difference is  
**how we use it.**

– Stevie Wonder



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# Intro

Hi. My name is Kim Riley and I'm the Founder and Executive Director of The Transition Academy - college and career planning center for youth with disabilities. Our mission is to make economic inclusion a reality for youth with disabilities, especially for young people of color who have historically been failed by systems.

I am also a mom of a young adult son who was not adequately prepared to be successful after high school. I designed this organization as a solution to this problem impacting our family as well as others like ours.

For far too long, parents of youth with disabilities have described life after high school as "falling off a cliff." These feelings of dread are due to the fact that the preschool to high school process is easy to follow. But life after high school is a different story. And the systems (i.e. employment, benefits) are confusing.

In fact, it seems like you need a secret knock and password to understand what employment and benefits opportunities are available and match you or your child's interests. We, at The Transition Academy, believe every youth of every ability level deserves the right to live a happy and productive life.

We designed this guide in an effort to explain these systems and processes in easy-to-understand language. Our goal is to help youth, families and teachers to understand how to work the system so these deserving young adults are successful after high school.

Please let us know what you think. What information was helpful? What else is needed? Reach out to us at [thetransitionacademy.org](https://thetransitionacademy.org). And follow us at [facebook.com/transitionacademy](https://facebook.com/transitionacademy).

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Riley".

Kim Riley

# The Importance of Transition



Transitioning from school to college or a career can feel overwhelming to anyone. Every young person has to figure out what their future is going to look like. For students with disabilities, you will need to navigate the world with a different set of support systems than the ones you had in place as a student.

Research finds students with disabilities need three things to be successful in life after school: early employment opportunities, involved caretakers, and community employers who support the mission of inclusion in the workplace.

Transition is *hard*. It crosses multiple federal and state agencies and it can at times be incredibly confusing. It's common for people to get frustrated, but don't give up, never stop advocating for yourself, and reach out to others for help advocating with you if necessary.

This guide is designed to help with your transition, so you can approach your future with confidence. Review the model by age on the next few pages and then explore how to make services and benefits work for you.

This is your future. What will tomorrow bring?



**“ I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed.**

**– Booker T. Washington**

**”**

## ADVOCACY SUPPORT

Families who need advocacy information while their children are still in school can contact the following organizations:

### STATE RESOURCE CONTACT

MISSOURI: MPACT

Contact:

[800-743-7634](tel:800-743-7634)

[info@missouriparentsact.org](mailto:info@missouriparentsact.org)

<https://www.missouriparentsact.org/>

KANSAS: The Disability

Rights Center of Kansas

[1-877-776-1541](tel:1-877-776-1541)

[info@drckansas.org](mailto:info@drckansas.org)

<https://www.drckansas.org/>

# Transition Model

## STEP 1 Begin preparing your child for life after high school as early as possible

It's never too early to help your child start discovering their skills. Here is a guide for preparing you for Kindergarten through high school.

GRADES	GOALS	ACTIVITIES
K-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General self-awareness</li> <li>• Social skill development</li> <li>• Learning about all types of jobs and careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and job exploration</li> <li>• Activities that reveal personal interests and skills</li> <li>• Activities that offer decision-making and problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Household chores that help children learn daily living skills</li> <li>• Parents support love of learning</li> </ul>
Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Exploration: learning about options</li> <li>• Start developing a career plan based on students interests</li> <li>• Focus studies to encourage development of employable skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take tests to focus on areas of interest and skills</li> <li>• Support student involvement in IEP - learning self-advocacy; practice speaking up for yourself and your needs</li> <li>• Review IEP goals to make sure they are in line with employability goals               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ At 14 Years old: Students are eligible for transition assessments and starting a transition plan (some may be eligible earlier)</li> <li>◦ Kansas only: Eligibility for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and VR begins at age 14</li> <li>◦ Missouri only: Eligibility for Pre-ETS begins at age 16</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

GRADES	GOALS	ACTIVITIES
<p>High School Grades 9-11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore career opportunities</li> <li>• Explore extracurricular interests: sports or</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit vocational, technical schools or colleges</li> <li>• Explore work experiences through summer jobs or internships, apprenticeships, service and volunteering opportunities</li> <li>• Make sure to enroll in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Eligibility in Kansas - 14-21 years old</li> <li>◦ Eligibility in Missouri - 16-21 years old</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>High School Grades 11-12: College Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for transition to college</li> <li>• Analyze abilities and strengths to focus areas of study</li> <li>• Understand how to self-advocate for supports and accommodations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 11: Take the ACT test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Summer/Fall before senior year: Tour colleges and meet with disability offices to discuss services available</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Grade 12 Fall: Apply for VR Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Apply for admission to schools of choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Log-in to the student portal of your desired college regularly and check student email for updates and next steps.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ Talk to VR counselors about tuition funding or scholarship availability</li> <li>◦ On or after October 1st: Apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expect financial aid packets to arrive in March-April</li> <li>- Compare the different costs of desired colleges to choose the best fit</li> <li>- Discuss funding and payment options with the college's financial aid and business offices</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

GRADES	GOALS	ACTIVITIES
High School Grade 12: Career Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for transition into a fulfilling and engaging career</li> <li>• Understand how to self-advocate for services and accommodations</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for VR Services</li> <li>• Work with VR counselor to sign up for job training programs</li> <li>• Continue to explore work experiences to find a good fit with skills</li> <li>• Explore housing and independent living options</li> </ul>

# Johnny Gordon's Story: Advocating for College Success



Johnny Gordon was thrilled he got into his dream school, Old Dominion University. But once at college, his overwhelming anxiety almost caused him to drop out. He was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder during his senior year in high school, but he was afraid to disclose his disability at college because he didn't want to be stigmatized. Now he says that reaching out to the Office of Disability Access ended up being the best decision he could have made. "When I got to the office, I was greeted with warm hearts and faces. They helped me advocate for additional work times, safe spaces for test taking, and therapy sessions for my anxiety." In 2020, he graduated with his Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art, and he's now pursuing a Master's in Education, with plans to be an art teacher. He hopes others hear his story and are inspired to advocate for themselves so that they can have the same opportunity for success.

**“ I was able to succeed thanks to a community willing and ready to help me out. I just want to be a part of that community for someone else now.**

**– Johnny Gordon**

**”**



## STEP 2 Career Discovery

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What kind of job do you want?

Discovery is the first step to help youth plan their future. Every person has skills and talents. How do you discover your skills and match them to employment opportunities?

Griffin-Hammis Associates developed the Discovering Personal Genius (DPG) process. This process works with individuals to find the perfect fit for both the individual and the business owner.

Resource: <https://www.griffinhammis.com/what-we-do/customized-employment/>

The customized employment workbook evaluates personality, interests, skills and the types of tasks that can be performed. Then it matches them with themes, and then identifies job opportunities related to those themes. This isn't just about finding some job or just any job. It's about finding the perfect fit for you.

Resource: <https://www.griffinhammis.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Developing-Vocational-Themes-Workbook-v2.pdf>



**Parents should talk to their child about things like:**

- What am I good at?
- What is a challenge for me?
- What do I like to do for fun?
- What kind of work would I like to do?
- What kind of work could I do with accommodations?

# Yousef's Recipe for Finding a Fit



Yousef Tamasami struggled during the pandemic as many of his services shut down. Yousef is autistic and struggles to speak, but working in the kitchen together gives him so much joy, that his family cooked up a plan to build a business together: **Yousef Speaks Spices**.

Yousef's mother Ezdahar says the business isn't magic, it's not a fix for all of her son's struggles. But she says parents can't give up on their children. She never gave up hope and she's thrilled their family worked together to find something that makes Yousef so happy. Her message to parents is that finding your child's fit for their skills and talents won't just happen on its own: it takes hard work, parent involvement, and patience.



“ As a parent you have to decide do I give up hope? Or do I decide there's always hope and I will offer him opportunities, and offer him the ability to create those experiences because it may not happen on its own.

– Ezdahar Tamasami

”

## STEP 3 Determine If You Need Guidance With Post-High School Planning

Many families choose to work with Support Coordinators (SCs) to help them access state and federal benefits. Here are the steps for signing up to be assigned to an SC:



# Missouri

(Bates, Cass, Clay, Lafayette, Jackson, Johnson, Platte and Ray counties)

## STEP 3A

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Call the Kansas City Regional Office (KCRO) intake line at [816.889.3452](tel:816.889.3452) to begin the assessment process to find out what benefits and services your child/youth qualifies for.

## STEP 3B

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KCRO will determine the child's/youth's eligibility for the Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities (DMH-DD). DMH-DD operates the Medicaid waiver program for persons with developmental disabilities.

- To qualify you must have an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, autism, or epilepsy
- Must have occurred between age of 22 and considered to be lifelong

## STEP 3C

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If during the eligibility process, the child's/youth's Medicaid becomes active (KCRO will send you a MO Health net Application with the application packet) then the individual is referred to their county for support coordination.

- Empowering Individuals through Advocacy and Support (EITAS) covers Jackson County.
- Center for Human Services (CHS) covers Clay County.
- Platte County Board of Services covers Platte and Ray counties.

# Kansas

Community Development Disabilities Organization (CDDO) - Support coordination in Kansas has a very long wait list (10 years or longer.) You should still make sure to apply to get on the list.

Each county runs their own CDDO Office

LOCATION	RESOURCE	CONTACT
Wyandotte County	<a href="https://www.wycokck.org/Departments/Human-Services/Community-Developmental-Disabilities-Organization-CDDO#section-9">https://www.wycokck.org/Departments/Human-Services/Community-Developmental-Disabilities-Organization-CDDO#section-9</a>	(913) 573-5502 <a href="mailto:WCDDO@wycokck.org">WCDDO@wycokck.org</a>
Johnson County	Handbook: <a href="https://www.jocogov.org/department/community-developmental-disabilities-organization/handbook">https://www.jocogov.org/department/community-developmental-disabilities-organization/handbook</a>	10501 Lackman Rd, Lenexa, KS 66219 (913) 826-2626

Because these resources have such long waiting lists, it's a good idea to get involved with an advocacy group that can help you navigate the transition from high school to adulthood.

An excellent resource in Kansas is Families Together Inc  
<https://famielsttogetherinc.org/>

Your VR/Pre-ETS Transition Specialist can also be a good resource for you as you navigate the transition process. For a referral to a specialist serving your community, call KS Rehabilitation Services toll-free: [1-866-213-9079](tel:1-866-213-9079).



## STEP 4 Employment supports

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Sometimes individuals need more support to find and keep a job than Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can provide (i.e. someone to provide on-site job training until they get the hang of the job duties). That's when VR will connect you with agencies that provide additional support. These are called Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). You must be enrolled in VR in order to apply for these services.

Individuals can pick whichever CRP is the best fit for them.

So how do you decide? When calling providers, you're interviewing them!

So ask a lot of questions to see which agency is the best fit for you. You should be excited to see your provider and feel comfortable with them knowing that they have your best interests in mind.

Sample questions to ask when screening CRPs

My child has difficulty communicating orally and has cognitive limitations that affect his receptive and expressive language skills. Can you help her get and keep a job?

I lost jobs because I have difficulty organizing, planning, and prioritizing job duties and assignments. Can someone discreetly help me learn the job duties?

### Examples of some of the CRPs in Kansas and Missouri:

- Ability KC - <https://abilitykc.org/>
- Diversity Placement Services - <http://www.diversityplacementservices.com/>
- Easter Seals Midwest - <https://www.easterseals.com/midwest/>
- Community Services League - <https://www.csicare.org/>
- Job One - <https://jobonekc.org/>
- The Whole Person, Inc. - <https://thewholeperson.org/>

# Jonah Taylor's story



Jonah Taylor struggled to find just the right fit for him after finishing high school. Since he's autistic and nonverbal, his parents worried about sending him to an employer who may not fully understand Jonah's needs. After working through several options with his job coach at Developing Potential Incorporated, they decided to try out entrepreneurship.

Parents Kim and Tony knew that Jonah would do great with repetitive and specific tasks like refilling a vending machine and taking money out of the machines. His mother Kim knows Jonah loves his business, because every week when he puts on his Jonah's Vending t-shirt, his face lights up with "a thousand watt smile, and that's how we know he loves doing what he's doing." Jonah's father Tony adds that Jonah is a perfectionist "and when he puts Doritos in a coil in a snack machine, every one is aligned perfectly in the machine. He's fast and quality first and you see that pride through his performance in a way that's unique to Jonah."

Every person transitioning from school to adulthood should have the opportunity to find the perfect fit for them, something that gives them a sense of pride and purpose.

## STEP 5 Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and make it work for you

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can help people with support and services to make sure they can either continue their education (college or technical career training) or find work.

### Am I eligible?

To receive VR services in Kansas or Missouri you must meet **ALL** three requirements:

1. You must have a physical or mental impairment or disability
2. Your disability is causing a barrier to employment
3. You need assistance to find and keep a job

*If you are receiving SSI or SSDI, you are most likely eligible for Vocational Rehab.*

## **Types of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services:**

### Transition Services

- Starting in high school: career assessments, guidance and counseling
- Job training or internships
- Creating resumes and job search training
- College readiness
- On-the-job supports
- Depending on financial need, VR could possibly assist with educational training costs. The VR Counselor will work with the client to determine this.

**NOTE: You can still be involved in Pre-ETS until age 21. Pre-ETS and VR work together to help you in your transition into adulthood.**

### **Supported Employment is for people with the most significant disabilities.**

Individual Placement with Supports (IPS) is for people who receive services through the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Services include:

- Discovery and Exploration services - community-based job exposure and determination of job support level needs
- On-the-job supports

### **Supportive Tools**

These are items or services that help you keep a job such as:

- Books, equipment, tools, supplies
- Reader (if you are blind) and interpreter (if you are deaf) and tutor services
- Voice controlled computer systems
- Prosthetic or orthopedic equipment
- Technology that helps you see or hear better on the job
- Personal assistance services
- Wheelchairs or home modifications

## General Support Services

- Transportation services to get to rehab training
- Physical and mental rehabilitation
- Financial assistance while you are getting some voc rehab services

These tools and services are based on financial need. VR Counselors will complete a financial needs assessment to determine assistance.

# How to apply in Missouri

Contact your local VR office at  
<https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation/vocational-rehabilitation-offices>

or call [1-877-222-8963](tel:1-877-222-8963) toll free to find the office in your area.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Phone - [573-751-3251](tel:573-751-3251)

Toll Free - [1-877-222-8963](tel:1-877-222-8963)

TDD - [573-751-0881](tel:573-751-0881)

[info@vr.dese.mo.gov](mailto:info@vr.dese.mo.gov)

# How to apply in Kansas

Web: [www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/default.aspx)

Phone: toll-free [1-888-369-4777](tel:1-888-369-4777). (Relay Center for people with hearing or speech impairments: toll-free [1-800-766-3777](tel:1-800-766-3777))

In Person: Visit a DCF Access Point in your community – to get a referral to the office serving your community, call: [1-866-213-9079](tel:1-866-213-9079) or TDD [1-800-432-0698](tel:1-800-432-0698)

Vocational Rehab in Wyandotte County:

402 State Avenue | Kansas City, KS 66101

Phone: [913-942-3695](tel:913-942-3695)

Vocational Rehab in Johnson County

8915 Lenexa Drive | Overland Park, KS 66214

Phone: [913-942-3303](tel:913-942-3303)

Kansas VR Handbook

<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Documents/VRHandbook.pdf>



**When you apply, your counselor may also need some of the following records:**

- Medical and/or behavioral health records
- Psychological/educational testing records
- Education transcripts and/or Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Social Security Disability and/or SSI allowance letter

**In BOTH Kansas and Missouri, AFTER APPLYING TO VR - WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

1. VR will meet with you to learn more about you and your disability and how it affects you regarding employment. The VR Counselor will gather information to determine eligibility for VR Services. VR will need your medical, school or employment records.
2. You and your counselor will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) – this helps you stay focused on your job goals and what services you need. Services will be provided based on your IPE and will depend on your individual needs.
3. VR is here to support you in your job search. In some cases, you will need to find the job and apply for the job yourself.
4. Once you have the job, VR can help you keep your job by providing follow along services for at least 90 days.

**Some questions Vocational Rehab might ask you:**

- What is your disability?
- What are your strengths, skills and interests?
- What doctor or hospital care or treatment have you had for your disability?
- How does your disability keep you from getting or keeping a job?
- What kind of work have you done? What kind of work are you interested in doing?
- What kind of education or experience do you have?
- What kinds of insurance or other funding do you have which would help pay for the services you need?

<b>MYTH:</b>	<b>FACT:</b>
Vocational Rehab is only for severely disabled individuals.	Vocational Rehab can help with various degrees of disability! It's for anyone with any documented disability and VR can also offer support for young people considering college or careers.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Federal Law sets the list of Vocational Rehab services, so they are the same in every state. However, every school district or county will operate a little differently based on resources available to them.**

If you are denied services you believe you should be eligible for, federally-funded Parent Training and Information Centers can help. These organizations can either support you in self-advocating for services or can work directly with VR to resolve problems or misunderstandings.

CAP Programs in Missouri and Kansas are:

Missouri Protection and Advocacy - [\(800\) 392-8667](tel:8003928667)

Disability Rights Center of Kansas - [\(800\) 264-6343](tel:8002646343)



# Is entrepreneurship for you?

Maybe the perfect job for you isn't working for someone else. Maybe you want to start your own business.

Less than 1% of eligible people with disabilities take advantage of a program that pays 100% of start-up business expenses. The Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) Program is through the Social Security Administration. PASS is for people who receive SSI-Disabled or SSDI benefits. The program focuses on helping people with disabilities become self-sufficient - including launching their own businesses.

## **To apply for the PASS Program you must meet these requirements:**

- Desire to work or start a business.
- Already receiving (or you qualify for) Supplemental Security Income (SSI) because of disability or blindness.
- You must have other income and/or resources available for starting your business (You cannot only rely on SSI for all expenses).

**NOTE: Money you receive as part of the PASS program DOES NOT count as income or resources toward your SSI eligibility or payment amount. In fact, this program is designed to encourage people to work, so setting aside money for your business plan could actually increase your SSI payments or allow someone to qualify for SSI if they had too much income previously. PASS funding also does not count toward any other federal programs such as SNAP (food stamps) or HUD (housing subsidies).**

**Less than 1% of qualified individuals apply for the PASS program each year**

# How does it work?

## **You need to have a “reasonable” work goal. What does that mean?**

- The goal should be specific: do you want to open a coffee shop or a food truck? Not just “start a business.”
- You must be able to show that you have a reasonable chance to achieve the goal. For example, if you want to open a coffee shop, have you already had training on making coffee or learning how to cook? Does the work take into account your disability or limitations you might have?
- The goal should fit within a reasonable time frame. Why? The goal is that your business should be earning income within 12-18 months after start-up. This is because the ultimate goal is to help you become self-sufficient and eventually reduce dependence on SSI. (Note: this would not impact health care benefits such as Medicaid, but you should be aware that the PASS Program’s goal is eventually reducing SSI and SSDI payments.)

## **You will also need to start putting together a business plan.**

### **What does that mean?**

- You will need to figure out what items or services you would need to achieve the goal and how much it costs.
- Outline all expenses: for example equipment costs, transportation costs.
- Costs should be reasonable: for example can you buy some equipment used instead of the top of the line to help keep expenses down?
- You will need to keep all expenses separate from personal accounts: plan to open a business checking account.
- How would you plan to advertise your business? Who are your competitors? Who are your customers?

**NOTE: If you are setting aside money for your plan, your SSI payment could actually increase to help make sure you can cover all your living expenses.**

# How to apply

## **Do you need help setting up your business plan? Contact:**

- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Service Corps of Retired Executives
- Vocational counselor
- A local banker
- Family or friends who own their own business

**Contact the local Social Security Administration (SSA) office to complete a PASS Form: SSA 545 and then mail it or take it to the office.**

Tip: Your Vocational Rehab Counselor or a benefits specialist can refer you to the SSA office to help you with this application

## **What happens after I apply?**

- A PASS specialist will evaluate your application and may suggest changes.
- The specialist will also review the PASS occasionally to make sure the program is happening as planned.
- If a PASS is denied, you can either appeal or submit a new plan.

The Transition Academy is developing entrepreneur training sessions. Sign up at [thetransitionacademy.org](http://thetransitionacademy.org) if you want more information.

# Joe Steffy's Story: Possibilities are Poppin'



As a child, Joe Steffy's parents saw that he liked doing things independently and enjoyed interacting with other people. Joe has down syndrome and autism, and in high school his transition team was not confident that he would ever be able to work. His parents disagreed, and saw his ability to stay focused on specific tasks, and that he had a good memory for details when he was shown how to do things. They knew Joe was happiest when he was busy, and they were determined to find a good fit for him to transition into adulthood.

The first time his dad, Ray, saw a kettle corn machine, he noticed the repetitive tasks of popping, scooping, bagging, and serving, and he was excited about the possibility that Joe could stay focused on such a task. They did a trial run, and Joe was able to learn about the process of adding sugar and other ingredients to the hot vegetable oil, stirring it constantly until it was ready to be dumped out and cooled. He was able to stay focused on the entire process for several hours and he could also bag the popcorn. The family grew more excited about the idea of Joe's own business.



Joe's mom and dad worked with Vocational Rehab to create a business plan, and through grants from Vocational Rehab, the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Social Security Administration's PASS program, they were able to receive \$25,000 in startup expenses. Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn business became a reality in 2005. He sells at fairs, car shows, festivals and also weekly deliveries to places like gas stations and farmer's markets. The first year of his business he made \$15,000, and profits doubled his second year, and continue to rise. Joe now lives in Georgia and travels the country sharing his story: "My business has also enabled me to have many adventures, going places and meeting people I would not otherwise get to meet."

**“ I have been blessed by incredible parents who have advocated for me since my birth. They saw my potential. They knew that I could succeed. They have given their time and energy to help make my business a reality and a continued success.**

**– Joe Steffy**

**”**

# General FAQs about Benefits and Becoming an Adult



Now that you're turning 18, you are an adult and your benefits might change. You will need to do two very important things - Apply (or reapply) for both SSI and Medicaid.

Here are some FAQs about benefits and becoming an adult:

## Supplemental Security Income vs Social Security Disability Income

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** – Considered a “needs based program” – it pays benefits to people who are disabled, blind, 65 or over and must have few resources or a low income – not based on work record.

\*This is considered as a payer of last resort, with no other means to support yourself.

**Social Security Disability Income SSDI** – Considered a disability insurance benefit. The payments are based on your work record.



**Q:**

**Once I turn 18 will I lose all my benefits? Do I need to reapply for benefits?**

**A:**

One you turn 18 you are now considered to be an adult and your benefits will be based on your income and resources. This could be a good thing for someone who had been denied benefits previously because their family resources were too high.

If you already receive SSI or SSDI you will go through the “Redetermination Process” which takes place after your 18th birthday – and Social Security will evaluate whether you continue to receive benefits.



## **MEDICAID**

**You MUST reapply for medicaid: Children’s medicaid will be discontinued when you turn 19, you must apply to see if you qualify to receive medicaid as an adult.**

### **Medicaid Application:**

Many people don’t realize there is a difference between the definition of disability for children and adults. As an adult, Social Security and Medicaid will determine whether you can work at a level to support yourself: this is called Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). Many people with disabilities can work and support themselves so just because you have a disability doesn’t mean you automatically qualify for Social Security or Medicaid. Your medicaid application packet will provide them with the information they need to make this decision. It can be a complicated process to complete this application so make sure to ask for help from a caseworker or counselor.

Families often worry about how turning 18 and exploring work or school options will impact their benefits. Here are some common questions and answers you may have about benefits and earning income:

**Q:**

**Does being in VR (Vocational Rehab) impact my SSI Benefits?**

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**A:**

The SSA will not review your eligibility for benefits just because you’re in VR. However, job earnings could affect your eligibility or benefit amount. However, the SSA’s Ticket to Work incentive program can help minimize any impact working would have on your benefits for a set amount of time. Read more details about the Ticket to Work program.

Resource: <https://www.disabilitysecrets.com/dnewsblog/2008/01/social-security-ticket-to-work-program.html>



**Q:**

**If I start working, will I lose my healthcare benefits?**

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**A:**

This is a common concern for people with disabilities who rely on their medical coverage. If you are working and getting SSDI cash benefits, you will keep Medicare. If your SSDI cash benefits stop because of work, you can keep your Medicare for many years because of the "Extended Medicare" program. If you receive other health care coverage such as MO HealthNet, you will need to keep income under specific amounts, so make sure to review all the rules with your caseworker.

**Q:**

**I'm raising my grandson and am on a fixed income. If he gets a job, will I lose my benefits?**

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**A:**

Your grandon's job status will not impact your benefits.

**Q:**

**What if I want to go to college and work? Can I still earn my benefits?**

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**A:**

If you are under the age of 22 you can qualify for the Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIC) – which allows you to earn up to \$2,040 per month while going to school without having your SSI benefits lowered. Over the course of a year, you can make up to \$8,230 without impacting your countable earned income calculation.

**Q:**

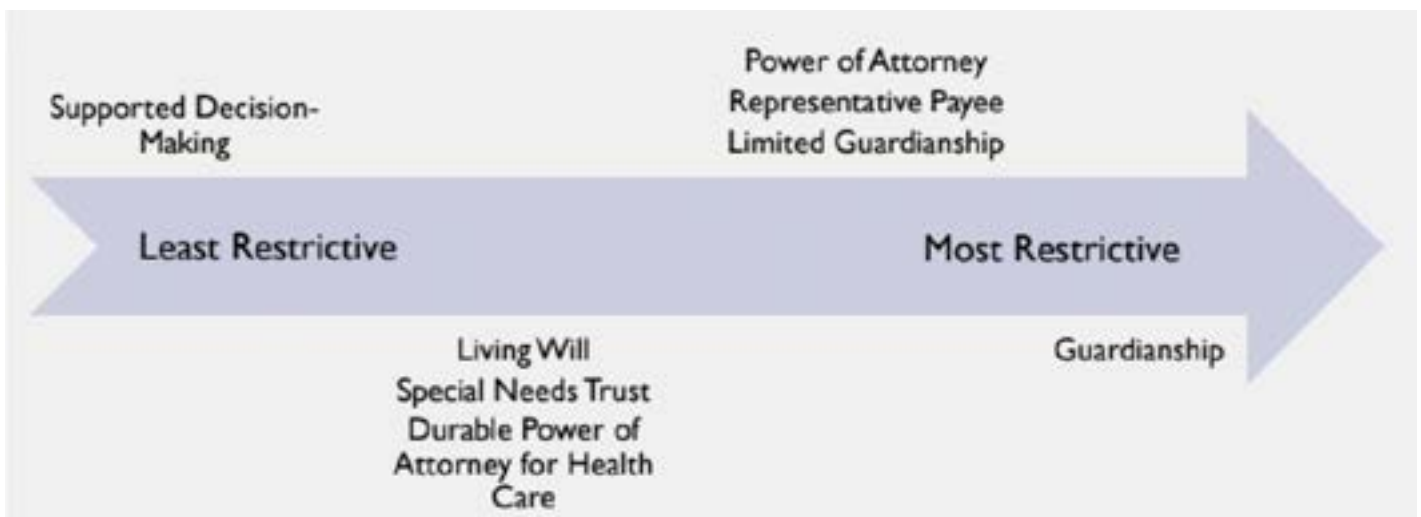
**Now that my child is turning 18, do I need to establish guardianship for my child?**

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**A:**

This is an individual choice for each person, but most people may not need guardianships. Guardianship is an expensive legal process, and if something were to happen to the guardian, then the state might take over guardianship which may or may not be the best situation for your child. There are other legal options you could explore including power of attorney or conservatorship that would still allow your child to have autonomy, but still make sure someone else oversees important legal decisions. Also, Kansas City Public Schools families have access to free guardianship services via Justice in the Schools (JTS) provided by Legal Aid of Western MO. For more information, go to

<https://www.kcpublicschools.org/families/family-services/justice>.



**For more resources to learn how to navigate benefits, here's state info:**

- Missouri <https://mo.db101.org/>
- Kansas <https://famielstoegetherinc.org>

# Services supporting the transition to college and career in the Kansas City area

FOCUS AREA	RESOURCE
ADULT SERVICES	<p>Ability KC  Centers for Independent Living (CIL) - KS  Easter Seals Midwest  Financial Opportunity Center  Full Employment Council  Goodwill  Guadalupe Center  Kansas City Regional Office  KS Association of County Developmental Disability Services  KS Department for Children and Families  Life Unlimited, Inc.  MO Association of County Developmental Disability Services  MO Community Options and Resources  MO Department of Social Services  Preferred Family Healthcare  United Way  University Health - Behavioral Health  Urban League Kansas City  US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)  The Whole Person</p>
JOB TRAINING & PLACEMENT SERVICES	<p>Ability KC  Easter Seals Midwest  Full Employment Council  Goodwill  Job One KC  Kansas Works  Life Unlimited, Inc.  Pre-Employment Transition Services - MO  Pre-Employment Transition Services - KS  The Whole Person</p>

FOCUS AREA	RESOURCE
POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION	Best Colleges Guide for Students with Disabilities Disability Center (MU) Full Employment Council KU Transition to Postsecondary Education National Center for College Students with Disabilities Thrive (UCM) UMKC Student Disability Services
ADVOCACY, INFORMATION & SUPPORT	KS - Disability Rights Center of Kansas KS - Families Together Inc. Legal Aid of Western Missouri Kansas Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns Kansas NAMI - National Association on Mental Illness MO Chapter Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE) Missouri Family to Family MO Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing MO Developmental Disabilities Council MO Governor's Council on Disability MO National Alliance on Mental Illness MO Parents Act (MPACT) Partners in Policymaking People First of MO Supports to Families UMKC Institute for Human Development

# Notes

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFORMATION*

\* Name of individual you spoke with, address, phone number, and e-mail.

DATE	NOTES	FOLLOWUP INFO

<b>DATE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>FOLLOWUP INFO</b>



THE TRANSITION ACADEMY

<https://www.thetransitionacademy.org/>

(816) 837-0744