



# Getting ready for life after school

## Top ten tips for young people

There are so many things to think about when getting ready for life after school – What do I want to do? Work? Study at Uni? Study at TAFE? Maybe an Apprenticeship or Traineeship? Where do I find out about what's involved? Who can help me? What support might I need? Where can I get it? What skills do I need?

This resource is a guide to some of the key things to think about, consider, and do when you are planning for life after school. Most are things that all young people need to think about – but there are also some extra things that young people with a disability should consider.

### 1. Get ready early

- Start planning for your transition from school as early as possible (age 14-15).
- The better planned your move from school is, the more positive and less stressful the experience will be.
- Make contact with people who can support you early – this will ensure there is plenty of time to organise any help or supports you may need at TAFE, university or work.

### 2. Get the big picture

- Think about and learn to understand yourself. What are your values, interests, long and short term goals, your strengths? What do you want for the future?
- Don't just consider career goals – think and talk to others about your goals, interests, and needs in a range of areas including social, education, employment and leisure. How can these fit together?
- Get to know your disability - How may it affect you in different settings? What supports might you need? What help have you had at school? Do you think you will need this type of help at TAFE, university or work? Different environments will have different expectations and challenges to consider.

### 3. Get connected

- ☑ Contact people who can help your transition. Start by connecting with school careers advisers, counsellors and transition teachers. They can help you make the links between school and your chosen pathways. For example they can connect you with disability staff at TAFE or university, or a disability employment service.
- ☑ Talk with your family, friends, and other people with disabilities about their experiences and about help that is available.
- ☑ Write down the names and contact details of people who have been helpful – they may be a useful contact in the future.

### 4. Get to know your options

- ☑ Research, ask questions and speak to people about different post-school options. Do you want to go to university? TAFE? Get an apprenticeship or traineeship? Seek work? What are the requirements of each option in the short and long term? Will your chosen pathway be realistic now? Will the long term career you are working towards be realistic in the future?
- ☑ Explore online resources and ask people for information and advice.
- ☑ Find out about support that is likely to be available to you in different settings. Will you be able to get the help you need?

### 5. Get the skills

- ☑ You'll need a wide range of skills in your future studies and work. For example you'll need good skills in communication, setting goals, planning, decision-making, problem solving, stress management, leadership, negotiation, team-work and resolving conflict. It's important to practice all of these skills while you are still at school and actively participate in career planning and work experience opportunities.
- ☑ Practical skills will be very important after school too. How will you get to your TAFE, university, or workplace? Can you travel independently? Can you find your way to other places for meetings or lunch? Are you able to manage your own money?
- ☑ How are your skills in using computers, the Internet and other technologies? Being able to use technology is extremely important in most education, training and workplace settings after school. Practice and learn new skills if necessary. There are also many tools that can help people with disabilities to access and use technology. These are often called assistive technologies, and many are available for free! Some examples of assistive technologies are speech recognition software, on-screen keyboards, and software which can read text aloud. Will you need equipment or support to help you access computers and other technology?

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## 6. Get organised

- ☑ How well do you manage your time and keep track of your activities? Organisation and time management skills are really important after school. Find ways of managing time and staying organised that work for you. Ask other people for advice and ideas and try different things out.
- ☑ Practice taking responsibility for making and keeping appointments and following up requests.
- ☑ Keep copies of all documentation about your disability. You are likely to be asked to supply the same paperwork from time to time. It will be much easier and less stressful for you if you have easy access to these documents and details. Keep copies of any forms or paperwork that you complete during your planning for life after school.

## 7. Get support

- ☑ If you have had help at school, you may also need some support in your future study or work. Support for people with disabilities is often called adjustments or accommodations in study and work settings. There are people who can help you to access this support, for example each TAFE and university has a disability service that you can contact. Now is the time to check out who to contact and what support will be available.
- ☑ Find out which potential future study or work settings will be able to give you the most appropriate support. Different adjustments may be available to you in different environments. It is important that you understand what support you can realistically expect to receive.
- ☑ Finding a mentor may be very helpful. A mentor is usually someone who is older and more experienced, and can offer support, advice and guidance. You may be able to find a mentor informally through a school or family contact or through a formal mentoring program. Local services may also be able to help you connect to mentors.

## 8. Get involved

- ☑ Get involved in a range of activities and experiences. These may include work experience, volunteer work, paid work, school or community groups, committees, and leisure activities. These activities will help you build important skills for your future education or employment. But remember to balance these activities with your studies, health, and other commitments.
- ☑ Practice asking for support and accommodations you might need to help you participate. Problem-solve ways to overcome barriers you might face.
- ☑ Consider practical issues around participating in these types of activities – How will you get there? Will you need help getting around? Are there costs involved?

## 9. Get to know your rights and responsibilities

- ☑ Get to know your rights. There are laws that protect your rights as a person with disability, in particular the *Disability Discrimination Act*. Check out useful websites and ask your parents and teachers.
- ☑ Learn your responsibilities. Having rights also means having responsibilities, and these are just as important. The best way to protect your rights in study, training or work is to also know and meet your responsibilities.
- ☑ Decide what you want to tell people about your disability. What are you prepared to tell them? Who will you tell? When will you tell? Telling people about disability is often called disclosure. Learn about your rights relating to disability disclosure in education, training and work. There is no obligation for you to tell people about your disability unless you require some support or adjustments to help you participate.

## 10. Get confident

- ☑ Practice standing up for yourself. Clearly communicate your strengths and skills, as well as how your disability affects you and your activities. Don't be afraid to explain to people what you need.
- ☑ Take responsibility for making contact with supports and services yourself. Parents/carers and friends can offer great support, but post-school settings will expect to work with you as an adult.
- ☑ Practice giving feedback – let people know when things are going well, but also don't be afraid to tell them if things are not working out. The sooner people know that there are ongoing problems or challenges, the sooner they can help you resolve them. When you need to raise a problem, practice doing it in a proactive and positive way. This can be difficult, but it is important as it will help to reduce conflict.