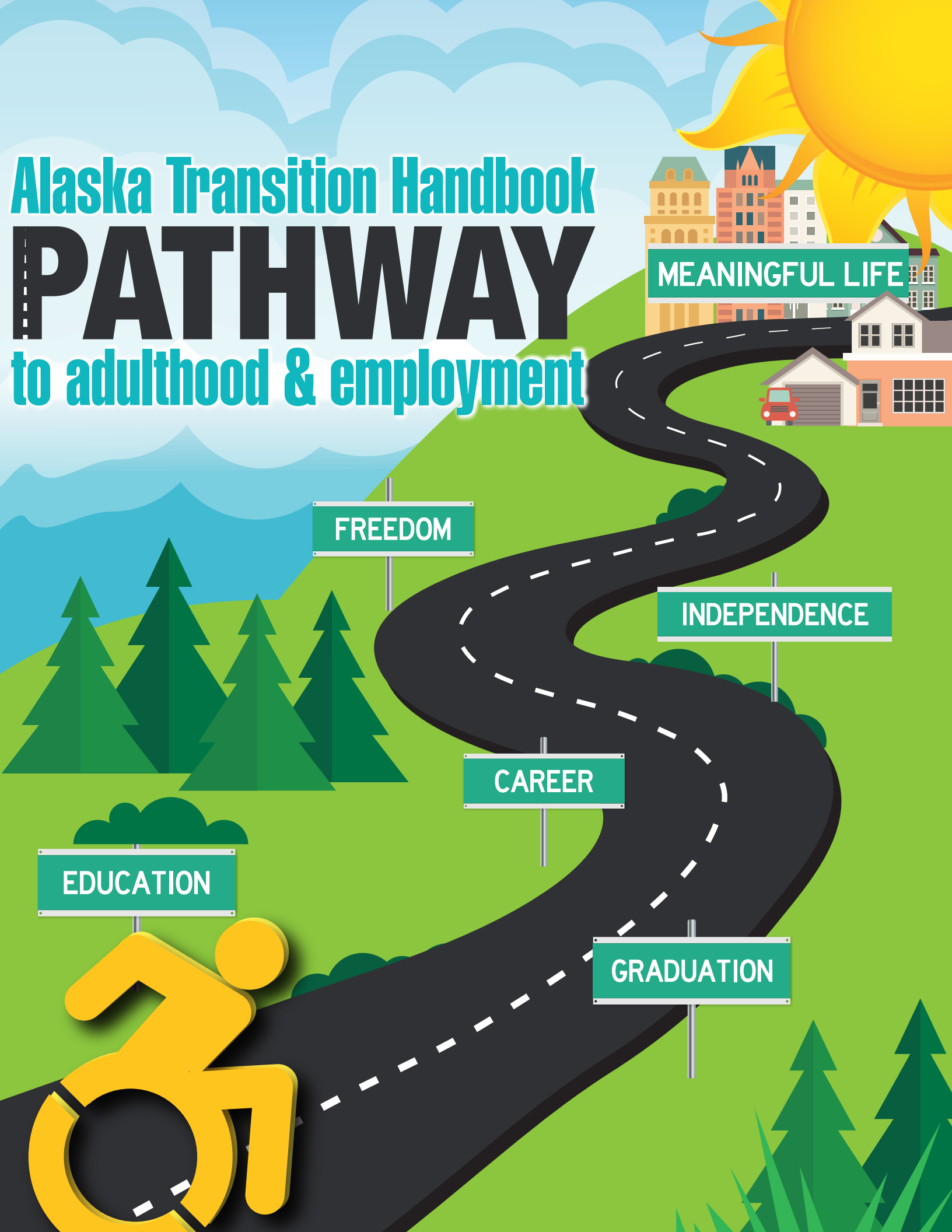


# Alaska Transition Handbook

# **PATHWAY**

## to adulthood & employment



MEANINGFUL LIFE

FREEDOM

INDEPENDENCE

CAREER

EDUCATION

GRADUATION

# Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision

Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.



Credit: Corey Gilmore



## Support people to live the life they choose

Join us:

[health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/ddsharedvision](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/ddsharedvision)

Find us on Facebook

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The new “FAB FOUR” of Alaska. From Left to right; Travis Noah, Maggie Winston, Ric Nelson, Corey Gilmore. These four stars are the new executive committee for the DD Collaborative



This publication was produced by the State of Alaska, Department of Health & Social Services, Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education to provide high school students and their families local information and resources to help with the transition into productive, meaningful adult life. Booklets were printed at a cost of **\$3.27 per** copy funded through federal and state funds specified for this project. Printed in Anchorage, Alaska.



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**Trust**  
Alaska Mental Health  
Trust Authority

# A Blueprint for Your Life

*For Alaskan students with disabilities, their families, service providers, and their teachers*

This Alaska Transition Handbook was created by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE).



[health.alaska.gov/gcdse](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse)

# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	6
ALASKA IS AN EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATE! .....	7
THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS SUCCESS .....	8
Develop an Individualized Transition Plan at School .....	8
Tips for the IEP Meeting .....	9
ALASKA TRANSITION PATHWAY TO ADULthood & EMPLOYMENT TABLE .....	10
HIGH SCHOOL .....	13
King Tech High School (KTHS) .....	13
Project SEARCH .....	13
Adult Community Transition Program (ACT), Anchorage School District .....	15
Bridge, Fairbanks School District (FSD) .....	16
Next Step Program, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District .....	17
Career Technical Education (CTE) .....	17
Districts Receiving Perkins IV Career & Technical Education Funds .....	18
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) .....	18
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....	19
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION .....	20
AVTEC .....	21
Job Corps .....	21
College-TAPESTRY .....	22
SCHOLARSHIPS .....	23
SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING AGREEMENT .....	23
SERVICES AND BENEFITS .....	28
Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) .....	28
Medicaid .....	28
Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) .....	29
Developmental Disability Resource Connection (DDRC) .....	29
Statewide Independent Living Council .....	30
Center for Independent Living (CILs) .....	30
Disability Law Center (DLC) of Alaska .....	30
The Client Assistance Program (CAP) .....	32
CENTER FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (CHD) .....	33
SENIOR & DISABILITIES SERVICES (SDS) .....	34



Services Available Through Medicaid Waivers .....	35
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority .....	36
Trust Beneficiary Employment and Engagement (BEE) Initiative .....	36
Trust Mini Grants .....	37
DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (DVR) .....	38
Services May Help You Pay For .....	38
TRIBAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (TVR) .....	39
TRANSITIONS TO ADULthood IN RURAL ALASKA .....	40
TRADITIONAL TRANSITIONS .....	40
JOB CENTERS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES .....	40
TICKET TO WORK .....	42
LOAN CLOSETS .....	42
Access Alaska .....	42
Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) .....	42
Independent Living Center, Inc. (ILC) .....	43
EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT .....	43
What is Reasonable Accommodation? .....	44
What Employment Practices are Covered? .....	44
Frequently Asked Questions .....	45
WORK INCENTIVES PLANNING AND ASSISTANCE (WIPA) .....	47
BENEFITS AND WORK INCENTIVES .....	48
Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE) .....	48
Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) .....	49
Disability Benefits 101 (DB 101) .....	49
Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act .....	52
EMPLOYMENT SMART TECHNOLOGY TOOL .....	56
SELF-EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES .....	58
Microenterprise .....	58
Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) .....	58
SUCCESS STORIES .....	59
REFERENCES .....	67
PEER POWER ALASKA .....	68
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION .....	69

# Introduction

Employment is most certainly an achievable outcome for everyone! Many individuals and families are afraid of losing vital benefits or do not completely understand what is available to make employment dreams a reality. Meaningful employment brings fulfillment and self-worth and is an opportunity that should be offered to all individuals with disabilities.

## This transition handbook is for parents, guardians, students, and caregivers:

- A guide to help navigate many possible options to obtain employment.
- A resource to help understand the services that are available to successfully achieve employment.
- A timeline to better assist focused planning of transition-related activities.

## Why are these transitions with a focus on employment important?

- Employment is a pathway out of poverty for individuals with disabilities; monthly income from Social Security Insurance (SSI) and Adult Public Assistance (APA) combined max out at approximately \$1,100 a month.
- Employment can promote independence; fostering broad benefits for long-term success and provide primary caregivers peace of mind for their child's future.

This guide is a resource for creating a successful plan for the future of your child's life. The future depends on many factors, but understanding the process and programs available will enrich your child's potential in reaching realistic goals and dreams.



# Alaska is an Employment First State!

On May 29, 2014, in Anchorage, Alaska Governor Sean Parnell signed the Employment First bill into law, making Alaska an Employment First State.

This law directs state services for individuals with disabilities to have the first and preferred outcome to become gainfully employed in a community-based integrated setting.

“You have a state delivering more efficient services at less cost, and people who need these services having better outcomes as a consequence. What’s more, employers are enthusiastic; reporting about the positive experience having a worker with a disability has been for their organizations.”

— Representative Charisse Millet

## Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)

A national organization that advocates and educates individuals and communities in order to obtain increased employment of individuals with disabilities in an integrated, meaningful and equally compensated environment alongside individuals without disabilities (integrated employment).

For more information on the national APSE organization: <http://apse.org/employment-first>

## REAL JOBS and REAL WAGES for Individuals with Disabilities

In 2018, Alaska became only the third state in the nation to repeal sub-minimum wage for individuals with disabilities, taking a firm stand that competitive wages of minimum wage or above for Alaskans with disabilities was important to Alaska.

# The First Steps Towards Success

## Develop an Individualized Transition Plan at School

When students receiving special education services reach 16 years of age it is required that a postsecondary transition plan is part of their IEP. These transition services are designed to help students move successfully from school to post-school activities including employment, further education, and independent living. Services are based on transition assessments that lead to the development of postsecondary goals, transition activities and the student's courses of study. The IEP must also include what services other agencies, if any, will provide for the student.

### Best practices for successful transition planning

- Student involvement is essential! Schools must invite students to the IEP, but their attendance is not required. Nonetheless, students should attend and engage in the process. Parents should talk to their student about postsecondary plans before the meeting. There are times when a student's attendance is not appropriate. However, whenever appropriate, it is best for the student to attend.
- Students who set their own goals are more engaged in the process and more likely to be accountable. Also, the information will be more accurate.
- Postsecondary transition is an ongoing process that is reviewed and revised at each IEP meeting. Because things change as students progress through high school, it is vital to stay engaged with the process until graduation.
- Make it a team effort!! Everyone has information to bring to the table when determining the student's strengths, needs, interests and preferences. While transition assessment will provide some of this information, family and teachers should be fully engaged in the process as well.
- Involve appropriate community agencies in the transition process. The school should be familiar with many of them. You may request that they are invited to the IEP meeting.
- Ask about the transition assessments. They will provide information regarding interests and preferences.

For additional information, please visit: <https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/products/KeepingItRealHowtoGettheSupportsYouNeedfortheLifeYouWant.html>





## Tips for the IEP Meeting

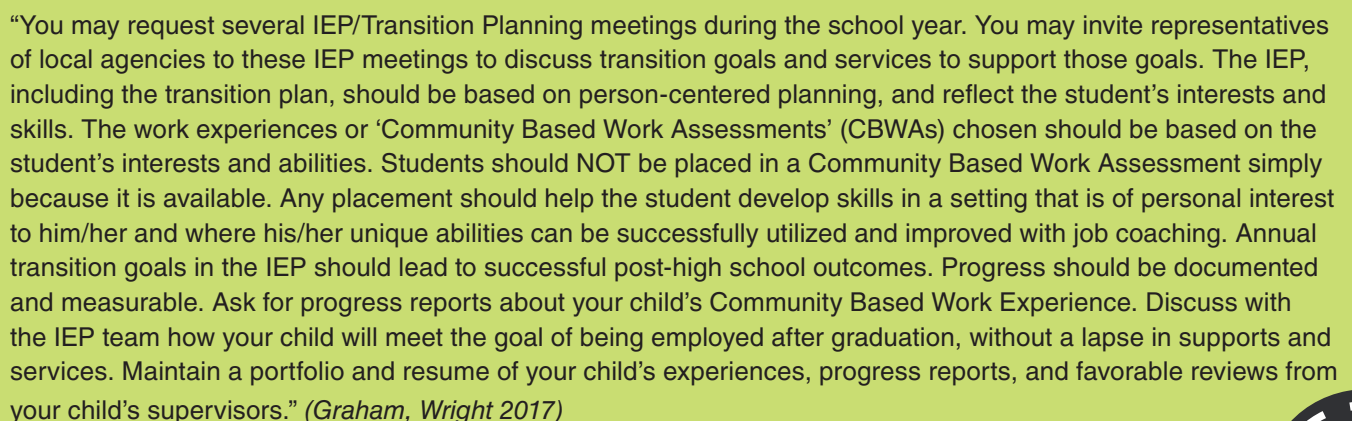
The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the document that outlines the special education and related services that are provided by school districts for each student receiving special education services. The IEP is developed by parents and school personnel and must be reviewed annually. This meeting can seem confusing and overwhelming for many parents.

### Here are some best practices that should help:

- Write down what you would like to see your child achieve academically and socially, and what you want out of the IEP meeting. Also, know the strengths, interests and preferences of your child.
- Write down the questions and concerns you want to discuss before the meeting. Once you are in the meeting, you may forget what you want to discuss or get side-tracked.
- The school must inform you of who will be attending the meeting. If you are not familiar with them, ask who they are and why they are attending the meeting.
- Keep well-organized records including past IEPs, test results, medication history, diagnoses, evaluation reports, daily behavior sheets, agendas, and discipline records.
- Ensure the ground rules are established prior to the meeting. Some suggestions are: set time frames, no interrupting, show mutual respect, keep comments concise, and no electronic distractions. If a long meeting is anticipated, plan adequate breaks to help everyone stay focused.
- A lot of information will be shared. Do not be afraid to ask questions so you fully understand the IEP and your child's educational program.

For additional information to achieve a successful IEP, please visit:

[www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.plan.graham.htm](http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.plan.graham.htm)



“You may request several IEP/Transition Planning meetings during the school year. You may invite representatives of local agencies to these IEP meetings to discuss transition goals and services to support those goals. The IEP, including the transition plan, should be based on person-centered planning, and reflect the student's interests and skills. The work experiences or ‘Community Based Work Assessments’ (CBWAs) chosen should be based on the student's interests and abilities. Students should NOT be placed in a Community Based Work Assessment simply because it is available. Any placement should help the student develop skills in a setting that is of personal interest to him/her and where his/her unique abilities can be successfully utilized and improved with job coaching. Annual transition goals in the IEP should lead to successful post-high school outcomes. Progress should be documented and measurable. Ask for progress reports about your child's Community Based Work Experience. Discuss with the IEP team how your child will meet the goal of being employed after graduation, without a lapse in supports and services. Maintain a portfolio and resume of your child's experiences, progress reports, and favorable reviews from your child's supervisors.” (Graham, Wright 2017)


The following pages contain a general best practices timeline for pursuing an employment focused future.

While the ages referenced are ideal, please keep in mind that it is never too late to develop a path to employment and that everyone's journey will look different.

## Alaska Transition Pathway to Adulthood & Employment Table

### The Outcome Goal is Employment!

Age 12–13	Age 14–16	Age 17–19
<b>GOAL</b> <i>Develop strong family expectations concerning meaningful work and self-sufficiency</i>	<b>GOAL</b> <i>Paid employment can begin as early as 14 in Alaska; look for paid work opportunities</i>	<b>GOAL</b> <i>Obtain real jobs in the community for real pay (minimum wage or above 20 hours+ a week)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about how work might affect benefits (SSI, APA, Medicaid) and what important work incentives Alaska has to support individuals with disabilities to become employed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin gathering together your transition IEP team: family or guardian, friends, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), providers, juvenile justice (if applicable), a school counselor or transition specialist, teachers, disability liaison from technical school or university.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition IEP team includes: student, parent or guardian, Community Service Providers, DVR, and others as applicable to student's transition goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin career exploration at home and at school (middle school career exploration unit)</li> <li>Take "field trips" to allow students to see different jobs of interest "in action."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin simple informational interviews and employment exploration at home and in the classroom.</li> <li>Start the discussion about career goals and work opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job coaches work with students on "Soft Skills" (social skills, communication, timeliness, hygiene etc.) before and at the worksite.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin looking at where the student's best fit is based on likes and dislikes, as well as strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop IEP goals around: social skills, employment, &amp; independence.</li> <li>The Transition IEP content is required at 16 by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to utilize <i>Pre-Employment Transition Programs (Pre-ETS)</i> through DVR and decide if additional DVR supports may be useful.</li> <li>As a DVR client, a student can pursue State of Alaska jobs through the State of Alaska DVR Provisional Hire Program.</li> </ul>



Age 12–13	Age 14–16	Age 17–19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It starts with allowance: begin budgeting and learning about basic financial money management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career exploration through job shadowing, internships, or volunteer experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look into developing an employment portfolio/vocational profile with DVR and complete discovery and self-discovery.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at applying for a Developmental Disability Waiver, an eligibility determination provided by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. <a href="http://health.alaska.gov/dsds">health.alaska.gov/dsds</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If Developmental Disability eligibility was not attained previously, look at applying again as two new categories are considered now regarding significant functional limitations: 1) Capacity for Independent Living &amp; 2) Economic Self-Sufficiency.</li> </ul>	Look at job-related routines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation</li> <li>Getting ready for work</li> <li>Lunches</li> <li>Getting to work on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin discussion about college or career ready assessment (Work Keys, ACT, or SAT).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore career and technical school options based on student's interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at work accommodations and adaptive equipment which may be needed (DVR can be a great resource).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin looking at post-secondary programs; college, technical school, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for and begin <a href="#">Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)</a>.</li> <li>Contact DVR to determine if future services are applicable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore options to complete discovery regarding ideal conditions of employment <a href="http://www.marcgold.com/forms">www.marcgold.com/forms</a>.</li> <li>Take classes that will help prepare the student for jobs that they are interested in, as well as classes which promote independence and self-sufficiency.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist student in becoming their own best advocate by learning about self-determination and self-advocacy as well as peer support.</li> <li>Student can join <a href="#">Peer Power</a> at any age and become part of a statewide self-advocacy organization. Read more about Peer Power on page 69.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to fill out job applications (the Alaska Job Center Network is a great local resource).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible paid work trials</li> <li>Short-term volunteer positions (if used, very specific/task learning goals)</li> <li>School-based work experiences (short-term/training oriented)</li> </ul>

Age 12–13	Age 14–16	Age 17–19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider opening an ABLE account (similar to 529 college savings account but specific for individuals with disabilities and will not impact benefits up to \$100,000).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents can take Alaska Employment Services trainings to learn more about: work incentives and benefits, financial literacy, and customized employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider if a college assessment is right for your goals - Work Keys, SAT, or ACT.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at choosing high school classes that will best equip the student for the careers that they are interested in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alaska Job Centers can provide resources on how to look for jobs and fill out applications, in addition to learning interview skills, and how to write a resume.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider a post-12th-grade school opportunity like Project SEARCH for a student's last year in high school – 4 Alaska Programs (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, &amp; Kenai).</li> </ul> <p><b>The outcome goal is employment!</b></p>

Age 20–24
<p><b>GOAL</b></p> <p><i>Employment in the community for minimum wage or above for 20 hours or more per week</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider a post-12th-grade school opportunity like Project SEARCH for a student's last year in high school. There are four programs in Alaska (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, &amp; Kenai)</li> <li>The outcome goal is employment!</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the Tapestry (Anchorage) Post-Secondary Program</li> <li>Take college classes at the University of Alaska Anchorage</li> <li>Look for scholarships and grants</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue job exploration (if needed) to become employed</li> <li>Try out jobs as a volunteer or look for intern or apprenticeship positions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider other post-secondary programs including technical school and/or other training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to use DVR and Alaska Job Center resources as needed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for long-term supports, if needed (such as services from the Divisions of Senior and Disabilities Services and Behavioral Health)</li> <li>Make a plan for housing and transportation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure that the youth is connected to peer support; consider becoming active in Peer Power (statewide self-advocacy organization). See page 69 for more information.</li> </ul>

To view an example transition service plan that will assist you in creating your own transition plan visit: <https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/TransitionServicePlan.pdf>





# High School

## King Tech High School (KTHS)

In the Anchorage area, KTHS is an option for students with disabilities interested in technical or vocational training.

Services include, but are not limited to, short-term internships, creating a career portfolio, skill development for job acquisition, and learning industry expectations.

This is open to 11th and 12th graders in the Anchorage School District and is free of charge. Transportation is provided if needed. High school accreditation is available for all of the programs offered, and opportunities for post-secondary education are available through KTHS.

Your home high school will work with KTHS in order to collaborate on a trajectory that the student should follow. The student will be monitored regularly and offered individualized assistance to help transition into the workforce. Students can choose their own classes with assistance from the transition specialist and may even enter one of the available regular vocational programs.

For more information about KTHS or its services, visit: [www.asdk12.org/KingTech](http://www.asdk12.org/KingTech)

## Project SEARCH

### High School Transition Program:

- This unique program provides real-life work experience to help youth, with significant disabilities, make successful transitions from school to adult life.

### Program Model:

- Project SEARCH is an internationally trademarked and copyrighted program model, which focuses solely on employment for Project SEARCH interns.
- The sole definition of a successful outcome is competitive employment.
- In an integrated setting for each Project SEARCH intern:
  - ♦ Employment in an integrated setting
  - ♦ Year-round work
  - ♦ 20 hours/week or more
  - ♦ Minimum wage or higher

To learn more, see an application, and/or connect with your local Project SEARCH site teacher, visit: <https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et/SEARCH.aspx>

## Project SEARCH is a Business-Led Program:

- This means that interns learn relevant, marketable skills while immersed in the business and those businesses are active partners participating without subsidies.
- The program has several rotations through unpaid internships with continual feedback aimed at developing transferable high-quality employability skills.
- Project SEARCH is intended to meet the needs of the business community (including currently unmet needs).

## To Learn More About Project SEARCH:

- National Project SEARCH program: [www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)  
Original site started more than five years ago at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.
- To learn more, access an application and/or connect with a local Project SEARCH site teacher, visit: [health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et/SEARCH.aspx](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/committees/et/SEARCH.aspx)

For Alaska-specific information, contact: Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director for Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education: 907-269-8990

For a video of Project SEARCH please visit:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XR5-ohEDAFY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XR5-ohEDAFY)

### Project SEARCH Sites



#### in Alaska:

##### **Anchorage**

Providence Alaska Medical Center

##### **Fairbanks**

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital

##### **Mat-Su**

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

"The goal for each student participant is competitive employment. The program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills to help youths with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to productive adult life. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with significant intellectual disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex rewarding jobs."

— National Project SEARCH Website



## Adult Community Transition Program (ACT), Anchorage School District

If you are an adult student with an IEP, who is enrolled in the Anchorage School District, and have completed your core credits for high school, but have not graduated, you have some additional options available to assist in the search for meaningful employment and transition.

### ACT PROGRAM

ACT program provides communication, social skills, transportation, recreation/leisure, independent living and vocational skills training in the community. Community-based instruction in these areas provide opportunities for a variety of experiences and activities in order for students to exit the program and the Anchorage School District, having acquired the necessary skills and numerous community connections to ensure a successful and fulfilling life. The ACT program is a postsecondary community based instructional program for adult students (18 to 21 years old) needing additional transitional supports after completing the required core credits at their neighborhood school. Students participate in their natural graduating class ceremony, however, their diploma or certificate of completion is sent to the ACT Program to hold until completion of the program. Students may continue earning elective credits with an emphasis on vocational skills/employment, recreation/leisure, and independence within the community.

### VOCATIONAL SKILLS

Aligned with Alaska's Department of Labor, the ACT program uses the 25 Work Maturity Skills to teach vocational skills. Work maturity skills are the job-related skills that every person needs in order to be a successful employee. Those skills are introduced, taught, and reinforced in the classroom as well as on work training sites. Assessment, goals, and evaluations are based on these targeted skills necessary to be successful on a job.

### COMMUNITY-BASED SKILLS

Community-based instruction is a critical component of the ACT Program. The community is where students are given the opportunity to acquire appropriate daily living skills during the transitional school years at the ACT Program. The expectation is that the students will live, work, shop, and play in integrated environments in the community, and that they will participate, either independently or with accommodations and supports, in typical activities across a variety of settings.

### INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

Independent living skills are weaved and taught throughout the ACT Program. Knowing how to make good purchases, cook, clean, and do other daily tasks and skills are learned. Independent living includes the skills and knowledge an individual needs to direct the students' life at home and in the community.

For more information, please visit: [www.asdk12.org/act](http://www.asdk12.org/act)



## Bridge, Fairbanks School District (FSD)

Bridge serves young adults 18-22 years of age with significant cognitive impairments who have completed four or more years of high school. Bridge provides students the skills necessary to become successful and productive within their homes, work environment, and community.

### **VOCATIONAL SKILLS**

Amongst other activities and lessons, Bridge implements Alaska's Department of Labor 25 Work Maturity Skills in teaching vocational skills. Work maturity skills are the job-related skills that every person needs in order to be a successful employee. The skills are introduced, taught and reinforced in the classroom as well as on vocational training sites. Vocational training is completed with assistance from Bridge staff. Transportation is provided to and from job sites by the school district.

### **COMMUNITY BASED INSTRUCTION (CBI)**

Community based instruction is a critical component of Bridge. The community is where students are given the opportunity to acquire appropriate daily living skills during their time spent at Bridge. The expectation is that the students will work, shop, and explore in integrated environments in the community, and that they will participate either independently or with accommodations and supports in typical activities across a variety of settings.

### **RECREATION/LEISURE SKILLS**

Recreation and leisure activities are a critical dimension of the quality of life for all people. These activities are a vehicle through which people have fun, meet new friends and develop skills and competencies. With supports available to them, students at Bridge will have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of recreation and leisure activities based on their personal interests and desires.

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS**

Independent living skills are also embedded into the curriculum at Bridge. Understanding how to make good purchases, cook, clean, launder clothing, and complete other daily tasks and skills are learned. Independent living includes the skills and knowledge and individual needs to direct the students' life at home and in the community.

### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING PARTNERS**

Vocational training partners invest in Bridge by: providing a vocational training opportunity, supporting students in developing employability skills, assisting in evaluating skills on the job and providing a safe, positive work environment.

For more information, visit our website at: [www.k12northstar.org/Page/2039](http://www.k12northstar.org/Page/2039)





## Next Step Program, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

If you are a part of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, the Next Step program is also available for adults with developmental disabilities. This program mirrors the ACT program in Anchorage and the Bridge program found in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

If you need more information, please contact the Mat-Su School District Student Support Services at: [www.matsuk12.us/Page/25792](http://www.matsuk12.us/Page/25792)

## Career Technical Education (CTE)

“The CTE plan addresses the individual need for career preparedness as well as the broader social need for a training and education system that is efficient, effective and coordinated with regional and state current and future work needs.” (University of Alaska, April 2015)

CTE is very similar to a vocational school in that it helps give applicants the necessary skills to enter the workforce prepared for an entry-level job or better. The program should be discussed during the IEP process, and the offerings of the program vary from district to district. Be sure to mention the CTE program when attending the IEP meeting, as it is a recent resource many educators and counselors are not familiar with, and may need reminding.

Overall, there are at least 50 different courses that are offered, each covering a broad spectrum of the employment industry. The education segments work to give you training and certifications appropriate for the desired field. Highly employable industries are the target, and the courses are tailored to make the student the best applicant they can be for the Alaskan workforce. Contact your local school district for more information: [www.asdk12.org/Page/5358](http://www.asdk12.org/Page/5358)

In addition to life and job skill offerings, CTE is also the only federally funded benefits program with its own internal civil rights department to investigate Equal Employment Opportunity discrepancies. This will greatly expedite the resolution of any workplace inconsistencies and keep workers with disabilities in a position to contribute successfully to the economy.

One of the great advantages of CTE is that with a vocational skill, the student can transition directly into the workforce and begin their independence right away. If the student chooses to pursue college, they are looking at systemic dependence for the duration of their schooling and upon completion still have to find a job in an inhospitable employment environment.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.alaska.edu/research/wd/cte/>

## Districts Receiving Perkins IV Career & Technical Education Funds

The districts listed in the link below received federal funding through the Perkins IV Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. This funding is supplemental and supports career and technical education programs in these districts. All districts, including those not receiving Perkins IV funding, may be offering career and technical education programs through other funding sources. Districts may be contacted directly for current information on their career and technical education offerings by using the Alaska District Contact Information Rolodex located on the Department of Education & Early Development website: [https://education.alaska.gov/alaskan\\_schools/Public](https://education.alaska.gov/alaskan_schools/Public)

## Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)

### State Education Policy

The purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

DEED provides several core services that include:

1. Distributes of public school funding to school districts and other educational institutions.
2. Provides fiscal accountability, compliance and oversight.
3. Develops, implements and maintains school effectiveness programs.
4. Maintains active partnerships for pre-K through 20 and lifelong learning.

### DEED Links and Additional Information


The Alaska Special Education Parent's Guide is a resource for parents of students with disabilities to support their involvement in their child's education and the development of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). This document was developed by LINKS Mat-Su Parent Resource Center for the Department of Education and Early Development.

For web access to the Parent Guide visit:

[www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1157/ParentResourceGuide2017.pdf](http://www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1157/ParentResourceGuide2017.pdf)

The Alaska Family Directory, [www.asdk12.org/afd](http://www.asdk12.org/afd), is a website developed and maintained by the Anchorage School District and funded by a grant from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

<b>Services Offered:</b>	AK Connect Newsletters	Disability Related Topics
	Statewide Resources	National Resources
	AK Conferences Calendar	Calendar of Disability Related Events



The Notice of Procedural Safeguards booklet provides information on parental rights for special education. This document is designed to help parents understand their rights regarding special education for their child.

Please visit the following website: <https://education.alaska.gov/sped>

## Additional Alaska Resources:

### Stone Soup Group (SSG)

As Alaska's designated State and Federal Parent Training and Information Center, Stone Soup Group offers training and information for parents regarding Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), family rights, and guardianship. For youth with special needs they have activities that teach self-advocacy, friendship and dating, and other practical life skills. SSG is also the federally designated Family to Family Health Information Center and can help families with the transition from pediatric to adult health care.

SSG is also a Parent to Parent USA affiliate, offering peer support for parents by matching them with mentor parents.

Link: [www.stonesoupgroup.org](http://www.stonesoupgroup.org)

### Alaska 2-1-1

Alaska 2-1-1 is a service of the United Ways of Alaska. The site [www.alaska211.org](http://www.alaska211.org) provides one-stop shopping for a variety of community resources, including emergency food, transportation, educational opportunities and counseling. Search the site for mental health services: [www.alaska211.org/search-our-database](http://www.alaska211.org/search-our-database). Services could include a psychiatric evaluation to determine whether medication might be recommended.

### Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)

The Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) was founded 30 years ago to serve as the voice of providers in order to enhance the quality of life of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by developing cooperation among agencies, communication of ideas, and coordination of activities through the dissemination of information among agencies, the public, the State of Alaska, and our strategic partner organizations such as the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. AADD was incorporated as a 501(c)3 in 2013 and currently has approximately 50 members [facebook.com/aaddalaska.org/](https://facebook.com/aaddalaska.org/)

## Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA)

Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) is a statewide, not-for-profit organization that focuses on increasing access to and the acquisition of assistive technology (AT), devices and services for individuals of all ages with disabilities. ATLA connects Alaskans with the tools they need to learn, gain or maintain employment and to participate in their school, home and communities as independently as possible. The staff works with people of all ages, birth through life, in the areas of low-vision, deaf/hard of hearing, communication, computer access, environmental access, accessible educational media, and language and literacy. ATLA's goal is to help bridge the gap between ability and disability using assistive technology.

ATLA is constantly following advances in the field of assistive technology to offer the expertise to consistently provide comprehensive, quality services. ATLA's services can cover a broad range of needs including assistance in the classroom, community, and at work, as well as, technology to allow those experiencing the effects of aging to safely remain living in their own homes. Providing funding exploration and distribution programs is another integral segment of the organization. ATLA believes that all people should be given the opportunity to learn about, try, and afford assistive technology devices. [www.atlaak.org](http://www.atlaak.org)

## Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

SESA is an educational service agency comprised of a low incidence disability service inclusive of a statewide lending library. Low incidence disabilities include autism, deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH), vision impairment, emotional disabilities and multiple disabilities. In addition, SESA operates two grants: 1) Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) and 2) Alaska Deaf Blind Project (DBP). For more information: [www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org)

## Postsecondary Education

There are many options for your child after high school. They could go to a college, university or they may be interested in going to a vocational school like Alaska Vocational and Technical Center (AVTEC). When choosing what path to take after high school make sure that you and your child thoroughly discuss what their plan is for employment and whether they want to get some training and just hop in, or if they want to spend a little more time in school and get a degree.

Financial aid is available for either college or vocational pursuits. DVR has funds available to assist individuals with disabilities to pursue their educational endeavors on their path to employment.





## Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC)

AVTEC is a vocational and technical institute located in beautiful Seward Alaska. They offer training in many disciplines and greatly facilitate the transition into the working populace. The disciplines they teach are broken into six main categories and each has several sub-categories which a student can select from.

The main categories are:

- Culinary Arts
- Maritime Studies
- Health
- Applied Technologies
- Energy & Building Tech
- Informational Tech

In addition to the technical and vocational training, AVTEC also offers job counseling, job placement, and workplace communications classes, which help student , build self-confidence and learn how to effectively communicate in the workplace with a team, supervisor, or difficult coworker.

If you are interested in AVTEC, please talk to your transitional coordinator or counselor during the IEP process.

For more information, please visit: [avtec.edu](http://avtec.edu)

## Job Corps

Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the [U.S. Department of Labor](http://www.dol.gov) that helps young men and women ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014](http://www.doleta.gov/wioa) (*supersedes WIA 1998*).

Website: <https://alaska.jobcorps.gov/about-us>

U.S. Department of Labor: [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: [www.doleta.gov/wioa](http://www.doleta.gov/wioa)

Phone: 907-861-8800

## College-TAPESTRY

### Bridge to Independence through Career Readiness

UAA TAPESTRY Workforce Credential Program

#### Mission of the UAA TAPESTRY Program:

The purpose of the TAPESTRY Postsecondary Transition Program is to provide students (ages 18 to 26) with a disability a postsecondary college experience to develop self-advocacy skills, social skills, and engage in career exploration that leads to employment in a career field or enrollment in a postsecondary educational program. Students earn a UAA Workforce Credential when they complete the one-year program.

#### Basic Eligibility:

Must have a disability in at least one or more of the following areas that is anticipated to affect the ability to pursue postsecondary education or employment:

- Self-care, receptive and/or expressive language, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, economic self-sufficiency
- Must have had an IEP
- Must be able to be independent and unsupervised while on campus, with or without a support person (please note: 100% supervision is not provided)
- Must have reliable transportation
- Must have a stable living environment
- Must have a plan for your medical needs while on campus

#### TAPESTRY Program Details:

The TAPESTRY Program is a one-year program (two semesters) starting in either fall or spring semester. There are four TAPESTRY classes the first semester and two in the second semester that are graded pass/no pass. Students will be placed in an internship in their second semester.

Orientation is held the week before classes start. Classes meet for 75 minutes, twice a week for 15 weeks.

There is financial support for this program on a case-by-case basis.

If you are 18-21 years old and have deferred your diploma you may be eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

For more information, contact TAPESTRY Student Services Coordinator 907-786-0424.

[www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/tapestry](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/tapestry)

# Scholarships

## Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Federal Student Aid, is a part of the U.S. Department of Education, and is the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation. At the Office of Federal Student Aid, our 1,200 employees help make college education possible for every dedicated mind by providing more than \$150 billion in federal grants, loans, and work-study funds each year to more than 13 million students paying for college or career school. They sponsor millions of American minds pursuing their educational dreams.

### What does FAFSA do?

Federal Student Aid is responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs provide grants, loans, and work-study funds to students attending college or career school.

For more information, please visit:

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

## Supported Decision-Making Agreement (SDMA)




### What is Supported Decision-Making for students?

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is the process of empowering individuals with disabilities to make decisions on their own as an alternative to guardianship or as a tool within guardianship when they reach 18 years old. Students who want to have a good understanding of their educational choices may need support from others to make informed, decisions about their future. A Supported Decision-Making Agreement is a written document describing how supporters will assist with decisions. It could be useful for students who face complex decisions, whose first language is not English and students with disabilities.

### How can a student use a SDMA?

Between the adult student and their chosen supporter(s) an agreement is signed that describes how the student wants the supporter(s) to assist with making education decisions. It may also grant access to educational documents. The agreement will describe the type of assistance



that is wanted by the student; whether it is getting information, giving advice about options, or helping with communication to others. The agreement can be terminated at any time from either party based on a determined need.

### **What can educators do to support this process?**

Educational professionals have a responsibility to prepare students to make the best decisions possible, and to help students understand they have a stake in their educational careers. The following activities can be done to better prepare a student to make decisions about their future:

- Ensure transition-age students have appropriate Self-Advocacy IEP goals, or have the demonstrated skills to advocate for themselves.
- Engage students in problem solving activities that encourage them to think critically about their decisions.
- Explain the Transfer of Rights and the Individual Education Program (IEP) process to the student. Make sure the student understands they aren't required to transfer rights.
- Educate the student and parents on the variety of options for decision-making support and legal supervision before the student is 18 years old.
- Encourage students to take on key roles in their IEP meeting before they are 18 years old, to demonstrate an active awareness of their educational strengths and needs.
- Counsel students on ways to make the best decisions and show them the costs and benefits to each of the options before them.

### **What is in place to train students to be aware of their needs?**

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education has resources and trainings online at <https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA>. Many schools have curriculum available designed to teach students how to be aware of their needs and disability as they transition to postsecondary opportunities. Usually, these include the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities aimed at developing their decision-making skills and preparing them to take an active role in their future. The members of the IEP team, including the student, should discuss what program or curriculum would be appropriate.

### **When should educators and parents start to discuss these issues with students?**

Students should be involved in a SDMA writing process as an alternative to entering into a guardianship or as a tool within guardianship. However, students should be involved in transition discussions no later than ninth grade. Throughout their educational careers, students should be actively involved in the decision-making process. If we begin to involve students at a young age they are more aware of their support network and their ability to make decisions on their own or request support from someone they trust.

## How should parents be involved?

Parents are required participants of their children's IEP team before they turn 18 years old, and can be chosen supporter(s) in a Supported Decision-Making Agreement after the student becomes an adult. Educators should encourage students to discuss their decisions with their parents as they feel comfortable. Students must make the decision that they feel best meets their needs in the educational setting, but they are able to seek their parent's support and guidance in the SDM process.

## Is the SDMA process the same as guardianship?

No. With written SDMA to describe the support relationship, students choose to seek guidance from other adults they trust to help them to think about and communicate to others about decisions in their lives. Guardians are appointed by the court to make decisions on behalf of the student. Under a court order for full guardianship the student does not have legal authority to make decisions for themselves (with a few exceptions).

If you have any questions or want to start a SDMA, contact the Disability Law Center:

[www.dlcak.org/html/contact.php](http://www.dlcak.org/html/contact.php)

SDMA website: [health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA)

Step-by-step training videos: [health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA/care.aspx](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/projects/SDMA/care.aspx)

### Supported Decision-Making Agreement (SDMA)



#### SDMA Links & Resources

- › SDMA Home Page
- › Decision Makers, Supporters, and Family Guardians
- › Lawyers, Paralegals and Non-Lawyer Advocates
- › Policy Makers and the Alaska Court System
- › Public Guardians and Court Visitors
- › Service Providers and Care Coordinators
- › Students, Parents and Educators
- › SDMA Overview
- › Step-By-Step Training Videos
- › Contact Information

**Supported Decision-Making Agreements** are written agreements that give people the help they need to make choices about their lives. These choices could be about where to live, what to do during the day, how to spend money, or when to see a doctor.

If you have an agreement, supporters can help you find out what choices you have and help you learn more about the choices you have made. They can find ways for you to try out different choices, to see how you feel and which ones you like. If you want them to, supporters can remind you of important dates and come with you to meetings or appointments. — Read more about SDMA



Service Providers and Care Coordinators



Decision-Makers, Supporters, and Family Guardians



Lawyers, Paralegals and Non-lawyer Advocates



Public Guardians and Court Visitors



Policy Makers and the Alaska Court System

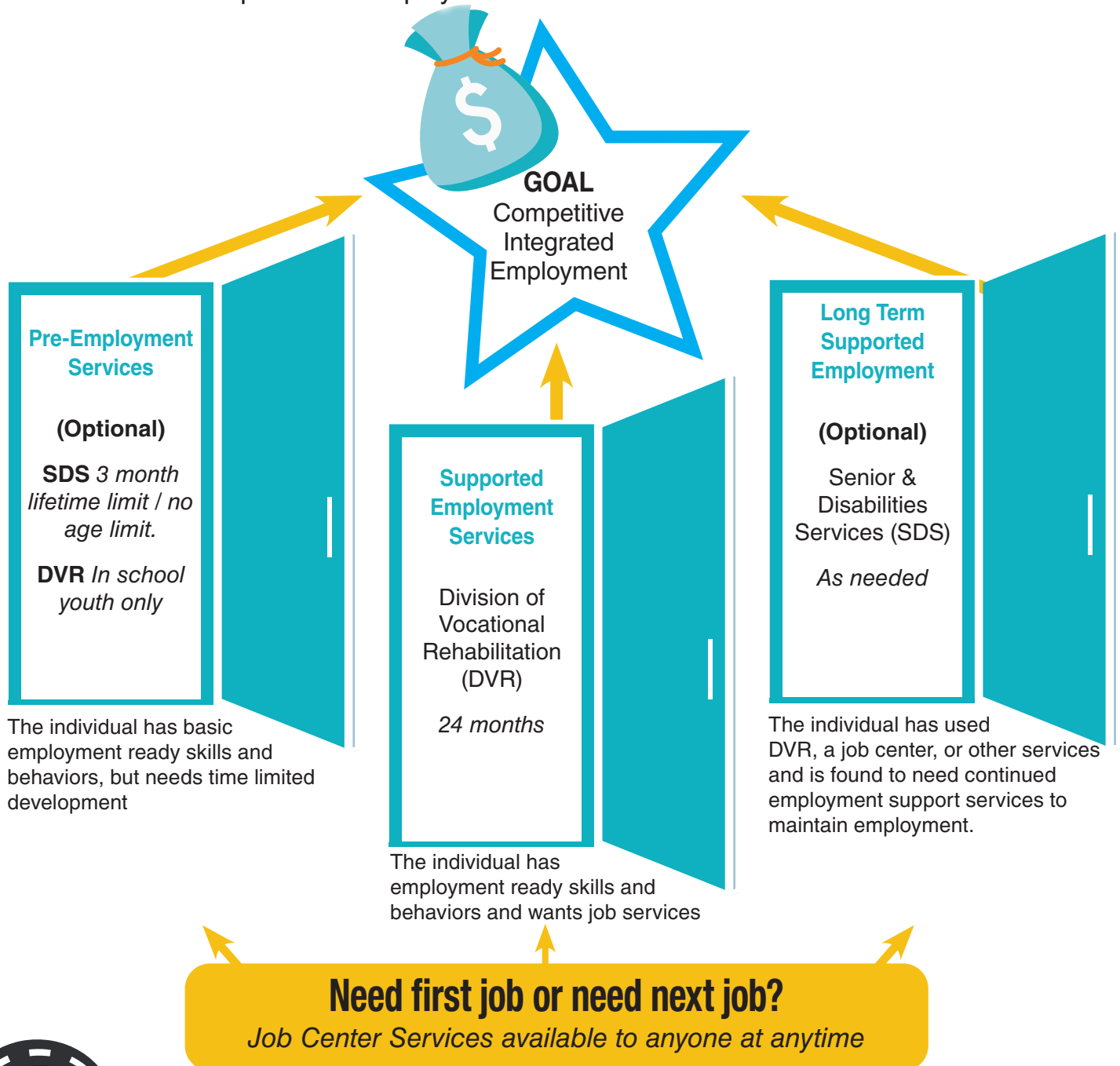


Students, Parents and Educators



# Alaska Employment Services Guide for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

**PURPOSE:** As an Employment First state, in Alaska the goal is to support working age individuals with developmental disabilities in moving quickly into integrated and competitive employment, with a common definition and sequence for employment services.



# Additional Considerations

## Public School Transition Services:

- Eligibility: All students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) beginning at age 16 or younger, if determined appropriate by Individual Education Program (IEP) Team.
- Services include: Identification of postsecondary goals, based on transition assessments, related to training education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills.
- Bring SDS providers and vocational rehabilitation, including Tribal VR as applicable, into the IEP process early to assist in planning for employment and transition from school to adult life, and to obtain school support for job experiences prior to graduation.

## Job Center Resources:

Alaska Job Centers around the state have staff who can assist with employment services and they can help anyone, not requiring a disability determination.

## Emerging work ready skills:

For those individuals who need more time to develop work ready skills, SDS waiver day habilitation services can include goals and objectives for the annual plan of care around becoming ready for employment.

## New Individualized Supports Waiver (ISW):

An individual who is found DD eligible by SDS can pursue a waiver with \$17,500 of services annually called the ISW which includes employment services: [health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/dd](http://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/dd)

## Employment First is:

- Competitive employment
- Minimum wage or above
- 20 hours or more per week
- Paid the same amount as an individual without disability

## Integrated Employment:

- Working alongside individuals without disabilities
- Working in the community

## Resources

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

[health.alaska.gov/gcdse](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse)

Main phone number: 1 (888) 269-8990

Division of Senior and Disabilities Services

[health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/dd](http://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/dd)

Main phone number: 1 800-478-9996

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

[labor.alaska.gov/dvr](http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr)

Main phone number: 1 800-478-2815

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR)

<https://aivrttac.org/alaska>

Main phone number: 907-793-3300

Department of Education and Early Development,  
Special Education

[education.alaska.gov/sped](http://education.alaska.gov/sped)

Main phone number: 907-465-8693

Microenterprise Grant (Self-employment resource)

[www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/migrant](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/migrant)

Disability Benefits 101 (Understand benefits and work)  
[ak.db101.org](http://ak.db101.org)

Alaska Job Center Network

[jobs.alaska.gov/offices](http://jobs.alaska.gov/offices)

Main phone number: 1 877-724-2539



*Funding by the Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative transition systems change grant as a Project of National Significance, through the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health & Human Services*



**UAA Center for  
Human Development**  
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

# Services and Benefits

## Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI)

Supplemental Security Insurance is a program offered by the Social Security Administration. This program's goal is to help people who are older, who are blind, who have a disability, or who have no or little income. This program helps those groups of people to afford basic needs like food, shelter, clothes, water, etc. It is offered to US citizens only. It is also subject to certain terms and conditions.

To be considered as having a disability for persons 18 or older, certain criteria must be met. This includes, having a documented and severe functional limitation and a disability that has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months.

To learn more, visit: [www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi/ssi.html](http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi/ssi.html)

## Medicaid

Medicaid is a program offered by the federal government, but is financed by both the federal and state government. It seeks to help pay for basic health needs and long-term care services for low-income Alaskans. To qualify for Senior and Disability Services (SDS) you must be eligible for Medicaid to receive waiver services.

### Adult Public Assistance (APA)

If you are not currently working or are working but your income is below the set limit, you qualify for Alaska's Adult Public Assistance. This is a cash payout to older individuals, those who are blind or have another disability.

### Working Disabled Medicaid Buy-In

If you are working and you begin to make more than the income limits and fear a loss of Medicaid coverage, this program offers Medicaid coverage in addition to allowing an individual with a disability work up to certain set limits.

This Medicaid coverage may include paying a small premium to keep your per-existing coverages intact. This is generally a low cost premium and is dependent on how much the individual makes.

To participate in the buy-in program, family income cannot exceed 250 percent of federal poverty guidelines for Alaska, and countable assets of less than \$10,000 (\$15,000, if married). Check with the Division of Public Assistance on the most current income limits for using this program and all necessary eligibility criteria.



## Section 1619(b) of the Social Security Act

Section 1619(b) of the Social Security Act is another avenue for continuing Medicaid coverage for persons with severe disabilities that want to work.

You must have all of the following conditions:

- Have been eligible for an SSI cash payment for at least one month
- Still meet the disability requirement
- Still meet all other non-disability SSI requirements
- Need Medicaid benefits to continue to work
- Have gross earnings that are insufficient to replace SSI, Medicaid and publicly funded attendant care services

For more information, on Medicaid and any of these programs, you can visit the Division of Public Assistance website to find your local office: <https://health.alaska.gov/dpa>

## Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC)

Alaska's Aging and Disability Resource Center connects seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers with long-term services and supports of their choice. The ADRC network serves Alaskans statewide, regardless of age or income, through regional sites.

ADRCs are part of a federal effort to help people more easily access the long-term services and supports available in their communities. This might include transportation, assistive technology, or in-home care.

The goal of ADRC is to be a trusted resource. ADRC can supply specialists, counsel callers, and can provide advice to individuals who need long-term care supports that fit their circumstances. People choose which services they would like, and then the ADRC specialists help people access those services.

The State of Alaska administers the ADRC grant through, and in partnership with, the regional sites. There are 12 different regional sites that have ADRC within them. For more information about ADRC in your local area, visit this website: <https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/adrc>. For phone assistance, call 1-855-565-2017 toll free.

## Developmental Disability Resource Connection (DDRC)

DDRC is the first step in being able to access services such as job coaching, supported living, day habilitation and other skill building services that will assist an individual to successfully transition into adulthood.

Going to the DDRC for a Person Centered Intake is one of the things everyone should do between the ages of 17-19.

## Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

The Statewide Independent Living Council ensures Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are available throughout Alaska for seniors, individuals, and families living with disabilities. The SILC and CILs work together to write a three year State Plan for Independent Living, and then monitor the implementation of that plan, including coordination of many initiatives aimed to improve the lives of persons with disabilities statewide.

## Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

Centers for Independent Living exist across the state in many communities. CILs are nonprofit organizations that are run by and for persons with disabilities. Independent living advocates believe that people with disabilities are the best experts on what is needed to live, work and play independently. They believe that all people should be able to live independently in the a community of choice. CILs work with people with disabilities to achieve these goals. CILs provide five core services:

1. Transition Services, including youth to adult transition, and transition out of institutional settings into the community
2. Peer Support
3. Advocacy
4. Independent Living Skills training
5. Information and Referral (some CILs are also Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Short Term Assistance and Referral (STAR) programs)


CILs also provide other requested independent living services that assist individuals with disabilities to live a more independent and better quality of life.

For more information on Alaskan CILs and locations: [www.alaskasilc.org](http://www.alaskasilc.org)

## Disability Law Center (DLC) of Alaska

DLC's mission is to vigorously enforce and advance the rights and interests of people with disabilities. They envision a future where people with disabilities are empowered to exercise individual choice and be equal participants in the community where they live, learn, work and play.

Alaska's Protection & Advocacy (P&A) agencies have unique authority to enforce both state and federal laws concerning the rights and benefits of individuals with disabilities. This authority includes initiating investigations of abuse and neglect in institutions, community settings, or programs that serve individuals with disabilities. All P&A agencies maintain a



presence in facilities that care for people with disabilities; where they monitor, investigate and attempt to remedy adverse conditions. P&A agencies also have the authority to provide legal representation and other advocacy services, under all federal and state laws, to all people with disabilities. These agencies devote considerable resources to ensuring full access to inclusive educational programs, financial entitlements, health care, accessible housing, and productive employment opportunities.

DLC is designated as the State of Alaska's P&A agency. With offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau DLC's provides legally based advocacy to people with disabilities throughout Alaska.

### Resources provided by DLC

The type of service provided is based on the unique facts and circumstances of the individual situation. The following intervention strategies are used by the DLC advocates and attorneys after a person has been deemed eligible and a case has been opened:

- **Professional Assistance:** This remedy includes providing coaching in self-advocacy, explaining the service system, and other methods for you to independently resolve your complaint.
- **Negotiation/Mediation:** This is when informal, non-legal intervention (letters, calls and/or meetings with others) is used to resolve your reported problem. At this level, you may receive assistance from an advocate writing a letter or making calls on your behalf and you may be accompanied to a meeting by an advocate.
- **Administrative Remedies:** This includes the use of a more formal advocacy strategy involving hearings, grievances, or complaints with federal or state administrative agencies. Examples are Office of Civil Rights complaints, Social Security Administration hearings, Special Education Due Process hearings, Medicaid hearings, etc. At this level, you would be accompanied by an advocate to any meetings or hearings.
- **Legal Remedies/Consultation:** This is formal legal representation for litigation in federal or state court. Up until this level, you may have been working solely with an advocate. At this point, you will be assigned an attorney to represent you.
- **Class Action Lawsuits:** This is formal legal representation of a group of clients with similar issues in litigation in federal or state court.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.dlcak.org/client-assistance-program/>



## Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The Client Assistance Program helps individuals who experience problems when applying for or receiving vocational rehabilitation or independent living services. CAP can help if you have questions about, or problems with:

- Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- A Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Office
- An Independent Living Center
- Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### Am I eligible for CAP services?

CAP may be able to help if you are a person with a disability living in Alaska and:

- Need or are receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) or independent living (IL) services
- Have been denied VR or IL services, or have been denied application to these programs
- Disagree with your VR or IL counselor's decision about the service(s) you receive or need
- Have had your VR or IL case closed and you are unhappy with the outcome

### If eligible, what can CAP do for me?

- Give you information about VR and IL services
- Inform you about your rights and responsibilities as an applicant or client of these programs
- Explain your employment rights under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act
- Show you how to advocate to protect and assert your rights
- Advise VR and IL agencies about problems with the "system"
- Arrange for legal services when necessary to represent you in a formal appeal before any VR or IL agency
- Advocate for appropriate planning for students moving from school to work

The full description of CAP: [www.dlcak.org/client-assistance-program](http://www.dlcak.org/client-assistance-program)



## Center for Human Development (CHD)

The mission of the UAA Center for Human Development (CHD) is to improve the quality of lives for people who experience disabilities and their families, across their life span, through interdisciplinary training, technical assistance, exemplary service development, applied research and dissemination of information.

The goals and activities of CHD are guided by the values of integration and inclusion, self-determination, individual and family empowerment, cultural sensitivity, diversity, community referencing, independence, and productivity.

Consistent with this philosophy, CHD serves as a bridge between university and community resources. CHD is a part of the College of Health at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/chd-genius/index.cshtml>

### Who is CHD?

The CHD Learning Registration and Tracking System (aka ‘Genius’) is an online resource for training and educational opportunities in Alaska for providers working in the disability field including those who serve the beneficiaries of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

Administered under the University of Alaska, Anchorage, College of Health, the Center for Human Development and its programs are responsible for providing non-academic trainings, professional development and continuing education programs to Alaska’s behavioral health and direct service workforce serving Trust beneficiaries.

This web-based system that offers a one-stop shop of training opportunities through CHD’s Alaska Training Cooperative (AKTC), Family Services Training Center (FSTC), and our community partners.

# Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS)

## MISSION:

Senior and Disabilities Services promotes health, well-being, and safety for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and vulnerable adults by facilitating access to quality services and supports that foster independence, personal choice and dignity.

If your student has a developmental disability, who is likely to require long-term supports, you might want to consider looking at services provided by SDS.

## STEP 1


To obtain services with SDS, the individual must become eligible by submitting an application for a Developmental Disabilities (DD) Determination and receiving an approval letter. The DDRC (Developmental Disability Resource Connection) program is a great resource to assist parents and individuals in applying for a Development Disability Determination free of charge. DDRC programs can also help with Medicaid documentation, completing the developmental disability registration and review process (step 2 below), and other needed programs such as applying for developmental disability mini-grants. DDRC discretionary funds are available to assist families in avoiding or alleviating a crisis if other resources, private or public, are not available.

## STEP 2

Once you have a DD Eligibility Approval letter, a DDRC representative can assist you in applying for the Developmental Disability Registration and Review (DDRR). This registration is used by SDS to determine your score, which puts you in proper order on the Registry, a process used for obtaining Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) waiver services as well as Individualized Support Waiver (ISW) services. The new ISW was developed to replace the Community Developmental Disabilities Grant (CDDG) program, which ended October 1, 2018. A primary difference between the ISW and the I/DD waiver is that the ISW does not offer extensive out of home supports like group homes. Also, the ISW has an annual cost limit of up to \$24,205. An individual must be on the DDRR to have the opportunity to be drawn for the ISW, or I/DD waivers.

## STEP 3

Once an individual is drawn from the Registry and receives a certified letter, they will also receive a list of local care coordination agencies. You will need to choose a care coordinator from one of the agencies. Your care coordinator will then submit to the state an Appointment of Care Coordination form and a Release of Information to notify the state that they have been chosen as your care coordinator. Then you work with your care coordinator to develop the initial Level of Care (LOC) packet, submitting this packet to SDS. If the LOC is approved and issued,



you then work with the care coordinator to develop an initial Person Centered Support Plan (PCSP) also known as Plan of Care (POC), submitting it to SDS for determination. LOC and PCSP are annual waiver processes so they occur each year.

Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) website: [health.alaska.gov/dsds](https://health.alaska.gov/dsds)

SDS Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Unit: <https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Pages/dd/default.aspx>

## Services Available Through Medicaid Waivers

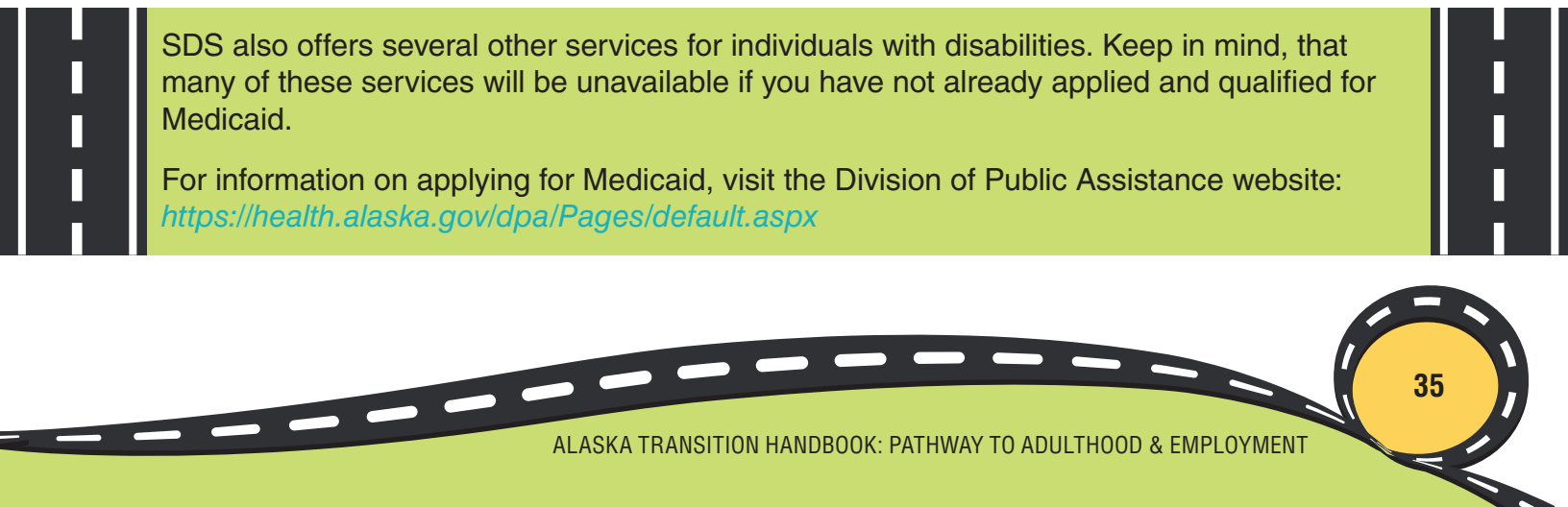
Once you are qualified for the I/DD Waiver or ISW, you will work with your care coordinator to determine the correct services for your Person Centered Support Plan (PCSP). Available services are detailed below and differ from I/DD, CMCC, and APDD Waivers to ISW.

Service	I/DD Waiver	ISW
Care Coordination*	x	x
Residential Habilitation (4 services)		
• Family Habilitation	x	
• Group Home	x	
• In-Home Supports < 18	x	x (limited)
• Supported Living >18	x	x (limited)
Day Habilitation	x	x
Respite	x	x
Supported Employment	x	x
Chore	x	x
Environmental Modification	x	
Intensive Active Treatment (IAT)**	x	x
Meals	x	
Nursing Oversight and Care Management	x	
Specialized Medical Equipment	x	
Specialized Private Duty Nursing	x	
Transportation	x	x

\*Care Coordination on the ISW is in addition to the individual's cost limit.

\*\*IAT will serve all ages until it becomes a Medicaid State Plan Service for children under age 21.

For more information on different services under the Medicaid waiver, please visit:  
[https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/pdfs/SDS\\_MedWaiverBrochure.pdf](https://health.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/pdfs/SDS_MedWaiverBrochure.pdf)



SDS also offers several other services for individuals with disabilities. Keep in mind, that many of these services will be unavailable if you have not already applied and qualified for Medicaid.

For information on applying for Medicaid, visit the Division of Public Assistance website:  
<https://health.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/default.aspx>

## Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (Trust)

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is a state corporation that administers the Alaska Mental Health Trust, a perpetual trust, to improve the lives of beneficiaries. The Trust operates much like a private foundation, using its resources to ensure that Alaska has a comprehensive integrated mental health program.

- Enhance and protect the Trust
- Provide leadership in advocacy, planning, implementing, and funding of a Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program
- Propose a budget for Alaska's Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program
- Coordinate with state agencies on programs and services that affect beneficiaries
- Report to the legislature, the governor and the public about the Trust's activities
- Educate the public and policymakers on beneficiary needs
- Collaborate with consumers and partner advocates
- Maximize beneficiary input into programs
- Continually improve results for beneficiaries
- Prioritize services for beneficiaries at risk of institutionalization or needing long-term, intensive care

Beneficiaries of the Trust include the following broad groups of Alaskans with:


- Mental illness
- Developmental disabilities
- Chronic alcoholism and other substance related disorders
- Alzheimer's disease and related dementia
- Traumatic brain injuries

The Trust also works in prevention and early intervention services for individuals at risk of becoming beneficiaries. The Trust considers prevention of these conditions, where possible, to be part of its mandate.

For more information, visit: [www.mhtrust.org](http://www.mhtrust.org)

## Trust Beneficiary Employment and Engagement (BEE) Initiative

Meaningful employment and engagement is critical in everyone's life. However, data demonstrates that Trust beneficiaries are underrepresented in integrated employment settings



with competitive wages. With this emphasis on beneficiary employment the Trust's intent is to ensure beneficiaries have the opportunity for:

integrated employment

meaningful activities and engagement

asset building

training and awareness

competitive wages

higher education

benefits analysis

support services

Involving beneficiaries in defining and mapping out their recovery is a well-known treatment tactic and may help prevent the need for more intensive traditional services. Although many beneficiaries and their family members share an interest in developing services, not all have the expertise or training to organize, implement, and sustain the programs they envision. This focus area also supports and helps fund grassroots, beneficiary-driven, peer-to-peer programs.

- Increasing peer-based recovery support programs and peer workforce to provide support to others with similar experiences and to enhance Alaska's continuum of care for beneficiaries.
- Developing community-based peer support and other forms of peer-based recovery management programs to help prevent the need for more expensive, intensive levels of service, including hospitalization and/or incarceration.
- Sustaining recovery support for persons with high severity and complex social and behavioral health issues who do not fare well in traditional services.

For more information, please visit: <http://mhtrust.org/focus/beneficiary-employment-engagement>

## Trust Mini Grants

The Trust mini grant program provides individuals within all Trust beneficiary groups up to \$2,500 for a broad range of equipment, supplies and services to improve their quality of life, increase independent functioning, and help them attain and maintain healthy and productive lifestyles. A mini grant is based on need and is awarded to an agency on behalf of the beneficiary. Mini grants are available in the following categories:

- Developmental Disabilities
- Behavioral Health
- Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

For more information, please visit: <https://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/alaska-mental-health-trust-authority/grants/mini-grants>



# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is an important resource on the path to employment. DVR is a state agency that provides counseling and supports individuals who have a disability prepare for, get, and keep good jobs. To qualify, you must have trouble getting or keeping a job because of a mental or physical disability, and need DVR services. DVR can find someone to assess your disability, and if you need it, DVR can pay for this too. If you get Social Security for a disability (SSI or SSDI) and want to work, then you may qualify for DVR. Let DVR know that you are receiving these benefits when you sign your application.

## DVR offers a wide range of services:

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), to help prepare students with disabilities, between the ages of 16 and 21, to transition from high school to postsecondary education, training, and/or employment.
- DVR services to prepare for a job.
- Medical exam to see if you qualify.
- Counseling, especially about disability issues that affect you.
- Help choosing the job goal that is right for you.
- Referral to other agencies that can help you.
- Tests and other tools to better understand your talents.
- On-the-job training with a real employer while you work.
- A short-term job try-out called a community assessment.
- Training designed for you, to help you adjust to working.
- Job search and placement services.
- Interpreter, reader, and tutoring services.

## Services May Help You Pay For ...

Listed below are other services that you may need to reach your job goal. These services have a cost to them. You and your counselor will decide together if you can help pay for any that you choose. DVR will make a determination on whether you can help pay for the services listed below. They will ask you about your household income, savings, and all experience you have had (except on-the-job training).

- Books, training supplies, tools, equipment (including computers), and other supplies
- Living expenses (see your counselor for details)
- Transportation (getting from place to place)
- Medical care and therapy
- Self-employment

- Devices that help with your disability (i.e. assistive technology)
- Services to family members
- Work licenses
- Any other goods or services

For more information about DVR services, please visit: <http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/>. Helpful videos to learn more about DVR and DVR School to Work can be found at: <http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/vrprogram.htm> and <https://youtu.be/FOc40SiiO1Y>

For more information on resources and services for transition age youth, including Pre-Employment Transition Services, you can learn more on the Transition Tools for Teachers, Parents and Students web page at: <http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/transition.htm>

## Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR)

There are 11 TVR programs within Alaska, 10 that receive competitive funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, to provide culturally relevant services and supports that are based on the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and, most importantly, informed choice. Tribal VR programs are available to work with the local school districts and the state DVR program to compliment transition plans and Pre-ETS provided by the state DVR program.

### Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

#### **Tanana Chiefs Conference**

##### **Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

122 First Avenue, Suite 600

Fairbanks, AK 99701

PH: 907-452-8251 Ext. 3232

Fax: 907-459-3883

Email: [amanda.race@tananachiefs.org](mailto:amanda.race@tananachiefs.org)

<https://www.tananachiefs.org/services/family-services/tribal-vocational-rehabilitation-program>

#### **Cook Inlet Tribal Council**

##### **Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Leila Taylor, M.S.

Case Management & TVR Manager

Cook Inlet Tribal Council

3600 San Jeronimo Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508

[www.citci.org](http://www.citci.org)

Direct 907.793.3364

Fax: 907-793-3398

Email: [ltaylor@citci.org](mailto:ltaylor@citci.org)

<https://citci.org/employment-training-services>

#### **Association of Village Council Presidents**

##### **Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Irma P. Goodwine

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Manager

PO Box 1818, Bethel, Alaska 99559

PH: 907-543-7451

Fax: 907-543-7492

[www.avcp.org](http://www.avcp.org)

#### **Bristol Bay Native Association**

##### **Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

P.O. Box 310

Dillingham, AK 99576

PH: 907-842-2262

Fax: 907-842-3498

<https://www.bbna.com/our-programs/workforce-development/%20vocational-rehabilitation-program>

**Kodiak Area Native Association  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Rosa Skonberg  
Project Director  
Kodiak Area Native Association  
3449 Rezanof Drive East  
Kodiak, AK, 99615  
PH: 907-486-7388  
Fax: 907-486-1340  
Email: [TVR@kodiakhealthcare.org](mailto:TVR@kodiakhealthcare.org)  
<https://kodiakhealthcare.org/what-we-do/community-services/workforce-development>

**Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

P.O. Box 1610  
Barrow, AK 99723  
PH: 907-852-2447  
Fax: 907-852-8179  
<https://icas-nsn.gov/departments/vocational-rehabilitation/>

**Kawerak, Inc.  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

P.O. Box 948 Nome, AK 99762  
PH: 907-443-4362  
Fax: (425) 658-9241  
Toll Free (Alaska Only): 877-759-4362  
Email: [vr@kawerak.org](mailto:vr@kawerak.org)  
<https://kawerak.org/employment-services/vocational-rehabilitation/>

**Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

1131 East International Airport Road,  
Anchorage, AK 99518-1408  
PH: 907-276-2700  
Fax: 907-279-4351  
Email: [api.ai@api.ai.org](mailto:api.ai@api.ai.org)  
<https://www.api.ai.org/services/employment-services/tribal-vocational-rehabilitation-aang/>

**Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Vocational Rehabilitation Program**


320 W. Willoughby Ave., Suite 300  
Juneau, AK 99801  
PH: 907-463-7393  
Fax: 877-560-3927  
Toll Free: 1 800-344-1432 ext: 7393  
Email: [tsarabia@ccthita.org](mailto:tsarabia@ccthita.org)  
<https://www.ccthita.org/services/employment/vocational>

**Maniilaq Tribal  
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

BH Ferguson Building  
PO Box 256  
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752  
PH: 907-442-7031  
Fax (888) 743-9264  
Email: [bree.swanson@maniilaq.org](mailto:bree.swanson@maniilaq.org)  
[www.maniilaq.org/social-services](http://www.maniilaq.org/social-services)

## Transitions to Adulthood in Rural Alaska

Some rural students want to stay in their home communities as young adults. Those transitioning adults want to learn and grow surrounded by the people they know, in places they call home. They want their adult lives to follow the seasonal patterns of living in the natural environment that make rural Alaska so unique and cherished. Adult lives in rural Alaska are unique; conventional wage employment may be replaced by self-employment, informal “gig” employment, or reciprocity. People share work and share the fruits of labor. Benefits like heating assistance can contribute to family security. Seasonal work can be done on a commercial fishing boat or a road crew. Dividends from ownership shares in Native Alaskan Corporations can provide income for eligible adults. For rural youth and young adults, transition planning should include transition goals that reflect the adult lives of the places where they live and want to stay, using targeted resources for rural transition planning, and place-based transition activities.



Here are some resources that Alaskan students, families, and educators should consider when planning transitions and providing transition activities for an adulthood in rural Alaska:

- *Southwest Alaska Vocational & Educational Center (SAVEC)*
- *National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development*
- *Office of Disability Employment Policy, Youth Entrepreneurship Education*
- *Alutiiq Museum for Teachers*
- *Alaska Native Civics and Government; Subsistence*
- *Creating a Subsistence-Based Curriculum*
- *Young Workers Project*

## Traditional Transitions

The purpose of this curriculum project is to improve the quality of life, connection to local community, and increase work related skills for teens and young adults with disabilities who live in rural Alaska. It provides tools teachers can use to incorporate traditional values and knowledge into Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Plans. Though each chapter of this project ties to the cultural values and topics of a specific region of Alaska, the skills can be used and adapted throughout the state. Each unit is developed in partnership with indigenous culture bearers and Elders. Each lesson includes regionally specific learning stories and suggestions for adaptation for students of different ability levels. For questions about this project, contact Rain Van Den Berg at [rainvdbconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:rainvdbconsulting@gmail.com).

<https://sesa.org/resources/educational/alaska-traditional-transition-skills>

## Job Centers and Available Resources

All Job Center frontline staff are trained to assist people with disabilities in discovering different options that may be available for obtaining gainful employment.

- Job Centers are found throughout the state of Alaska.
- They are a multifaceted resource that can help with job placement and training.
- They can also help establish a proper foundation to obtain gainful employment.
- Resume building, mock interviews, job application assistance, and database of readily available jobs and resources.
- All Job Centers staff are trained as disability resource coordinators to help people with disabilities through the job search process.

For additional information, please visit: [www.jobs.alaska.gov](http://www.jobs.alaska.gov)

## Ticket to Work

The Ticket to Work Program provides individuals receiving Social Security (SSDI or SSI) more employment support service options.

To be eligible for a Ticket, individuals must be over between the ages of 18 and 65 years old and currently receiving SSDI or SSI.

Once your Ticket is approved, you will want to assign your Ticket to an Employment Network for help in finding and maintaining employment.

You can locate a Ticket to Work Employment Network by contacting REACH at 907-796-7223; or RISE Vocational Program through Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Inc. at 907-444-0878

For additional information on Ticket to Work please visit: [www.choosework.ssa.gov](http://www.choosework.ssa.gov)

## Loan Closets

### Access Alaska

Access Alaska's loan closet provides assistive technology and adaptive equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, transfer benches, magnifiers, hospital beds, commodes, walkers, grab bars) to individuals with disabilities to increase their safety and independence in their homes and the community.

For more information: [www.accessalaska.org/dme-loan-closet](http://www.accessalaska.org/dme-loan-closet)

### Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)

SAIL maintains an assistive technology and equipment loan closet. Items that can be borrowed from the loan closet include but are not limited to; wheelchairs, walkers, magnifiers, and various hearing devices. Staff provide workshops and trainings so you can learn to utilize assistive technologies. The Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan offices offer computer access, with internet capabilities, for people with voice-recognition software. The Consumer Service Fund assists with purchasing adaptive equipment, home modifications, or other services to promote independence.

For more information: [www.sailinc.org/assistive-technology](http://www.sailinc.org/assistive-technology)



## Independent Living Center, Inc. (ILC)

All ILC offices have Community Equipment Loan Closets. Inventory items include mobility devices such as crutches, canes, walkers, and manual and power wheelchairs.

They also have bathroom safety equipment, grab bars, adaptive recreation gear, and various devices specifically for people experiencing hearing loss and/or vision loss. If you have equipment to donate or need a piece of equipment call the office nearest to you:

- Homer 907-235-7911 or 1-800-770-7911
- Central Peninsula 907-262-6333
- Seward 907-224-8711
- Kodiak 907-486-0493
- Valdez/Cordova Census Area 1-800-770-7911

For more information: [www.peninsulailc.org/Community-Closet](http://www.peninsulailc.org/Community-Closet)


## Employment Rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act<sup>1</sup>

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment against a qualified individual with a disability. If you have a disability and are qualified to do a job, the ADA protects you from job discrimination on the basis of your disability. Under the ADA, you have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity. The ADA also protects you if you have a history of such a disability, or if an employer believes that you have such a disability, even if you don't.

To be protected under the ADA, you must have a record of, or be regarded as having, a substantial, as opposed to a minor, impairment. A substantial impairment is one that significantly limits or restricts a major life activity such as hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for oneself, learning, or working.

If you have a disability, you must also be qualified to perform the essential functions or duties of a job, with or without reasonable accommodation, in order to be protected from job discrimination by the ADA. This means two things. First, you must satisfy the employer's requirements for the job, such as education, employment experience, skills, or licenses.





Second, you must be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. Essential functions are the fundamental job duties that you must be able to perform on your own or with the help of a reasonable accommodation. An employer cannot refuse to hire you because your disability prevents you from performing duties that are not essential to the job.

## What is Reasonable Accommodation?

Reasonable accommodation is any change or adjustment to a job or work environment that permits a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the job application process, to perform the essential functions of a job, or to enjoy benefits and privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities. For example, reasonable accommodation may include:

- Providing or modifying equipment or devices
- Job restructuring
- Part-time or modified work schedules
- Reassignment to a vacant position
- Adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, or policies
- Providing readers and interpreters
- Making the workplace readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities

<sup>1</sup>Portions of this section are copied directly from *The ADA: Your Employment Rights as an Individual With a Disability*, EEOC Publication, 2005, available at: [www.eeoc.gov/facts/ada18.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/ada18.html). Updates to that publication are found at: [www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/adaaa\\_notice.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/adaaa_notice.cfm).

An employer is required to provide a reasonable accommodation to a qualified applicant or employee with a disability unless the employer can show that the accommodation would be an undue hardship — that is, that it would require significant difficulty or expense.


## What Employment Practices are Covered?

The ADA makes it unlawful to discriminate in all employment practices such as:

recruitment	firing	hiring	training	job assignments
promotions	pay	benefits	lay off	leave
all other employment-related activities				

It is also unlawful for an employer to retaliate against you for asserting your rights under the ADA. The Act also protects you if you are a victim of discrimination because of your family, business, social, or other relationship or association with an individual with a disability.

If you are applying for a job, an employer cannot ask you if you are disabled or ask about the nature or severity of your disability. An employer can ask if you can perform the duties of the



For ideas about reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, search the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), at: [www.askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm](http://www.askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm). JAN offers free assistance by phone and email regarding accommodations questions, [www.askjan.org/contact-us.cfm](http://www.askjan.org/contact-us.cfm) and has a wealth of resources, [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org).

job with or without reasonable accommodation. An employer can also ask you to describe or to demonstrate how, with or without reasonable accommodation, you will perform the duties of the job.

An employer cannot require you to take a medical examination before you are offered a job. Following a job offer, an employer can condition the offer on your passing a required medical examination, but only if all entering employees for that job category have to take the examination. However, an employer cannot reject you because of information about your disability revealed by the medical examination, unless the reasons for rejection are job-related and necessary for the conduct of the employer's business. The employer cannot refuse to hire you because of your disability if you can perform the essential functions of the job with an accommodation.

Once you have been hired and started work, your employer cannot require that you take a medical examination or ask questions about your disability unless they are related to your job and necessary for the conduct of your employer's business. Your employer may conduct voluntary medical examinations that are part of an employee health program, and may provide medical information required by state workers' compensation laws to the agencies that administer such laws.

The results of all medical examinations must be kept confidential, and maintained in separate medical files.


## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. Is an employer required to provide reasonable accommodation when I apply for a job?**

A. Yes. Applicants, as well as employees, are entitled to reasonable accommodation. For example, an employer may be required to provide a sign language interpreter during a job interview for an applicant who is deaf or hearing impaired, unless to do so would impose an undue hardship.

### **Q. Should I tell my employer that I have a disability?**

A. If you think you will need a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions, you should inform the employer that an accommodation will be needed. Employers are required to provide reasonable



accommodation only for the physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability of which they are aware. Generally, it is the responsibility of the employee to inform the employer that an accommodation is needed.

**Q. Do I have to pay for a needed reasonable accommodation?**

- A. No. The ADA requires that the employer provide the accommodation unless to do so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business. If the cost of providing the needed accommodation would be an undue hardship, the employee must be given the choice of providing the accommodation or paying for the portion of the accommodation that causes the undue hardship.

**Q. Can an employer lower my salary or pay me less than other employees doing the same job because I need a reasonable accommodation?**

- A. No. An employer cannot make up the cost of providing a reasonable accommodation by lowering your salary or paying you less than other employees in similar positions.

**Q. Does an employer have to make non-work areas used by employees, such as cafeterias, lounges, or employer-provided transportation accessible to people with disabilities?**

- A. Yes. The requirement to provide reasonable accommodation covers all services, programs, and non-work facilities provided by the employer. If making an existing facility accessible would be an undue hardship, the employer must provide a comparable facility that will enable a person with a disability to enjoy benefits and privileges of employment similar to those enjoyed by other employees, unless to do so would be an undue hardship.

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act: <https://archive.ada.gov/workta.htm>

Find links to U.S. publications on employment rights for people with disabilities on the U.S. Department of Justice ADA page: <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/ada/#subchapter-i---employment-title-i>

## Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

### FREE RESOURCE IN UNDERSTANDING SSA DISABILITY BENEFITS & WORK

Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects are funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide information and benefits planning to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work. WIPA projects hire and train Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who work with individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to provide in-depth counseling about benefits and the effect of work on those benefits.



## Who is Eligible to Receive Services?

WIPA services are available to individuals eligible for Social Security disability benefits AND working, looking for work, or thinking about returning to work.

**Note: Social Security Disability benefits include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and Social Security Childhood Disability Benefits – (SSCDB), also known as Social Security Disabled Adult Child (SSDAC).**

## What do WIPA Services Cost?

All WIPA services are free of charge. There is never a cost to the beneficiary for services provided under a WIPA project.

## Preparing for Work Incentive Planning and Assistance

You may be interested in the services of a WIPA Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) if you are an SSI or SSDI beneficiary and you:

- Plan to start or return to work;
- Plan to accept or seek a higher-paying job;
- Plan to start your own business;
- Are concerned about stopping work; or,
- Have other questions about how work will affect your disability benefits.

## WIPA Programs Provide Beneficiaries with the Following Information and Support Services

- **Information and Referral:** Basic information in response to inquiries about all federal and state benefits programs, and/or referral to government agencies and other community resources.
- **Problem Solving and Advocacy:** Involves solving specific federal and state benefits and work incentive issues, and may include advocating on behalf of recipients with other agencies. They are not able to assist with applications or appeals.
- **Benefits Analysis and Advisement:** An assessment of real or potential effects of employment that will impact the recipient's overall financial wellbeing and inform recipients of various options available and the projected outcome of each.
- **Benefits Support Planning:** Direct assistance to the beneficiary to construct a plan to promote effective monitoring and management of their benefits programs and work incentives, including how to report wages.

- **Benefits Management:** Benefits monitoring and management assistance for those likely to experience employment benefits, or other changes that will affect benefits status, health care or financial well-being.

## Checklist: Get Started and Prepare for Your WIPA Meeting

Have a written list of your work history SINCE receiving benefits.

- Start with a resume if you have one, and add more details, including all dates of employment, earnings throughout the duration of employment and any time you were not employed.

*NOTE: If you do not remember some or any of this information, you can request it from your local SSA office, since they keep a record of the taxes you pay when working.*

- Have proof of your medical insurance and amount of food stamps.
- Gather letters you have received from SSA over the past several months.
- Have proof of any rental support you are receiving (i.e., subsidized or public housing, or contributions from other household members).

## How to Contact the Alaska WIPA Project

Contact Larrisa Cummings at [larrisa@alaskachd.org](mailto:larrisa@alaskachd.org) or call 907-264-6279 or toll free 1-800-243-2199.

# Benefits and Work Incentives

## Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)

The SEIE is a program through the SSA, which helps students who choose to work and attend school. The SEIE allows almost \$2,000 a month to be excluded from the student's monthly income when calculating benefits, which allows a larger base income and a greater potential for financial independence. This benefit is available as long as the student is considered to be regularly attending school. The definition of, "regularly attending school" differs between schools. For college, this is eight hours per week, and for grades 7-12, this is 12 hours per week to include home schooling. If the student is attending a vocational or trade school, this number is 12-15 hours a week, depending on whether the course requires any shop time.

If you would like to use this work incentive program, please contact your Social Security Office, your personal benefits counselor or DVR. They can help you make the most of this benefit as long as you qualify.

For additional information, please visit: <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500820510>



## Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)

PASS is a Social Security work incentive that allows the individual to set money aside for a future expense. There are constraints to the PASS, the main constraint being that the money set aside is to help achieve a better level of financial independence. This money can only be used for work-related purchases.

Social Security administers the PASS program, and if you would like to use it, the appropriate paperwork must be filed, processed and approved. DVR or your benefit counselor can assist you in making a PASS plan.

For more information, please visit: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0500870001>

## DB101 helps you find your way

- For career-minded Americans with disabilities, DB101 is the center of state-focused services when health coverage and disability benefits are key to job seeking decisions.
- DB101 calculators allow you to create and explore scenarios that match your life situation, and find out how changes in employment, earnings, marital status, or other factors may affect health coverage and disability benefits.

### DB101 Offers

- Plain language to navigate through disability benefits and health coverage rules.
- 24/7 access to interactive planning tools and calculators.
- Access to real-time support when planning to accept a job or changing jobs.
- Self-directed learning for disability beneficiaries.
- Teaching tools that deepen learning when benefits planners work with clients.

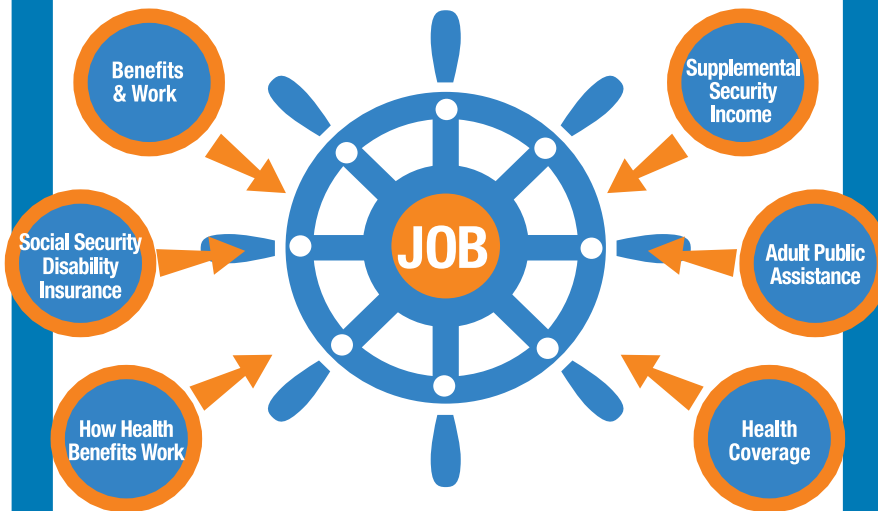
### Alaska DB101 includes

- Benefits and Work Calculator: What will happen to your income, benefits, and health coverage if you go to work? You can use the Benefits and Work Calculator to find out how a job may affect your total income and your health coverage.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Adult Public Assistance (APA): SSI and APA give cash benefits to people with disabilities and seniors who have low income and low resources.
- Social Security Disability Insurance: Provides cash benefits to people who worked and paid Social Security taxes before their disabilities limited their ability to work.
- Finding the Right Health Coverage for You: Explore the best health coverage options for you with this interactive tool.
- How Health Benefits Work: Learn the variety of health care coverage options available.



# Disability Benefits 101

working with a disability in Alaska



*Navigate through benefits and work!*

**ak.db101.org**

## Resources on How to Best Use DB101

- Video and PowerPoint provide an introduction to navigating through benefits and work.
- Video and case study immersion on how to use the Benefits and Work Calculator.
- Video on the four articles detailing use of the interactive tools throughout, including a quick reference guide to access interactive article tools more easily, as well as a document on how to set up benefits and work binders.
- Brief basic website navigation demonstration video.

For more information:

<https://health.alaska.gov/gcdse/Pages/db101.aspx>

## Disability Benefits 101

Alaska

Alaska | Sign In | Register

Home | Glossary | My DB101

Search



## See how work and benefits go together

Understand the programs that help you. See how work can help.

### What Benefits Do I Get?

How to see which Social Security and state benefits you get.



### Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI and Adult Public Assistance (APA) give cash benefits to people with disabilities and seniors who have low income and low resources.



### Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

SSDI gives cash benefits to people who worked and paid Social Security taxes before their disabilities limited their ability to work.



### Benefits Planning Estimator

Check the numbers to see how work can improve your situation.

#### Benefits and Work Estimator

Got a work plan? See how it would help your situation.

TRY IT →

GET A SAVED SESSION

Get Help



## Contact Information

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education  
Main: 907-269-8990  
Fax: 907-269-8995  
Website: [health.alaska.gov/gcdse](http://health.alaska.gov/gcdse)  
Join us on Facebook: [facebook.com/gcdse](https://facebook.com/gcdse)

Benefits Initiative World Institute on Disability  
<https://wid.org>  
[www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org) • <https://mn.hb101.org>

[ak.db101.org](http://ak.db101.org)



There is no limit to what people with disabilities can do. Now that includes savings as well. With Alaska ABLE Plan, you can save for qualified disability expenses without losing your eligibility assistance programs, like SSI and Medicaid

[ak.savewithable.com](http://ak.savewithable.com)

## Plan Highlights

### Save with special tax advantages

The earnings on your investments are federally tax-deferred and tax-free, if used for qualified disability expenses. This can help your savings have compounded earnings.

### Maintain your current benefits

- Balances of \$100,000 or less are excluded from your SSI resource limit.
- Only the amount OVER \$100,000 is counted against your limit, along with assets held in non-ABLE accounts.
- If your account causes you to exceed the SSI resource limit, then your SSI benefits will be suspended until the account balance no longer exceeds your resource limit.<sup>1</sup>
- You will continue to be eligible for Medicaid, regardless of your account balance.<sup>2</sup>

### Open an account in minutes

Just tell us a little bit about yourself and select your investments. That is it. From a PC, tablet or most mobile devices you can access your account at any time. In addition, you can get started with as little as \$25. Make withdrawals easily.

### With Alaska ABLE Plan, you can access your savings by:

- Going online
- Calling us
- Mailing a paper form

<sup>1</sup>Please see the Plan Disclosure Documents for complete details on SSI suspension and any requirements on when you use the funds, to prevent suspension of benefits.

<sup>2</sup>Please note that following the death of the account owner, the state Medicaid plan may file a claim against the account owner or the account itself for medical assistance paid under the state's Medicaid plan after the establishment of the account. Please see the plan Disclosure Documents for more information.



## Avoid hidden fees

The annualized investment costs on assets per investment option range from 0.34% to 0.38%, depending on which investment option(s) you select. Each account is charged an annual account maintenance fee of \$40 and an annual paper delivery fee of \$15 for the printing and mailing of statements and confirmations. The annual paper delivery fee will be waived if you sign up for electronic delivery.

## Who is eligible?

Eligible individuals can open the account for themselves, or an authorized individual can open an account on their behalf. There are a few requirements individuals with disabilities must meet to be able to have an account.

### You are eligible if:

- You're entitled to SSI or SSDI because of your disability; and
- Your disability was present before age 26

### You must clarify that:

- You have a physical or mental disability that can be expected to last for at least a year or can cause death; or you are blind; or your disability is included on the Social Security Administration's List of Compassionate Allowances Conditions; and
- Such blindness or disability occurred before age 26

*(Proof of eligibility is not required to open an account. However, you should maintain a record of your diagnosis, benefits verification letter or other relevant documents in the event that you are required to prove eligibility at a later time.)*

## What are Qualified Disability Expenses?

ANY expenses that are incurred as a result of living with a disability and are intended to improve your quality of life.

Qualified expenses include, but are not limited to:

Education	Health and wellness	Housing
Transportation	Legal fees	Financial management
Employment training	Employment support	Assistive technology
Personal support services	Oversight and monitoring	Funeral and burial expenses

<sup>3</sup>Earnings on non-qualified withdrawals may be subject to federal income tax and a 10% federal penalty tax, as well as applicable state and local income taxes.



### **When savings are used for non-qualified expenses:**

The earnings portion of the withdrawal will be treated as income, so it will be taxed at your tax rate and will be subject to a 10% federal tax penalty and applicable state taxes.<sup>3</sup>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Do I have to prove eligibility?**

No. However, you should have a record of the doctor's signed diagnosis, a benefits verification letter from the Social Security Administration or other relevant documentation for account verification as needed.

### **Do I have to prove that withdrawals are for qualified disability expenses?**

Not at the time of the withdrawal. Annually, Alaska ABLE Plan will report the total amount of your withdrawals to the IRS and the date and amount of each of your withdrawals to the Social Security Administration. In the event either entity wants to verify the expenses, it is recommended you keep detailed records.

### **Can I have more than one Alaska ABLE Plan account?**

No. You are limited to one ABLE account, except in the case of a rollover from another qualified ABLE program. This extends beyond Alaska ABLE Plan to include accounts in other ABLE programs. In the case of a rollover to an ABLE account for the same account owner, the account from which the funds are withdrawn must be closed within 60 days of the withdrawal.

### **How much can I contribute to account?**

The amount you can contribute follows the Gift Tax Exemption. If the gift tax goes up, the amount that you can contribute goes up along with it. No further contributions may be made until the start of the next calendar year. Account balance limit: \$400,000.

### **Earned Income Contribution**

ABLE account owners who are employed but who do not contribute to a defined contribution plan, annuity contract or deferred compensation plan can contribute above the annual contribution limit. The additional amount that may be contributed is the lesser of the federal poverty line for a one-person household or the account owner's compensation for the taxable year.

### **Can friends and family make contributions into my account?**

Absolutely. Anyone can contribute directly to your account. No matter who contributes, you, the account owner or authorized individual retain control over the account.

### How often can I change my investments?

Twice per calendar year. You can change your investment options for any NEW contributions at any time.

### What is a recurring contribution?

These are contributions of a specific amount made automatically into your account on a custom frequency basis. For example, you can set up recurring contributions of \$25 per month. This makes the process of investing very simple.

### Can I rollover a 529 College Savings Plan into my ABLÉ account?

You can rollover money from a 529 College Savings account into a beneficiary's (or family member's) ABLÉ account without being penalized.

### What is a Systematic Exchange?

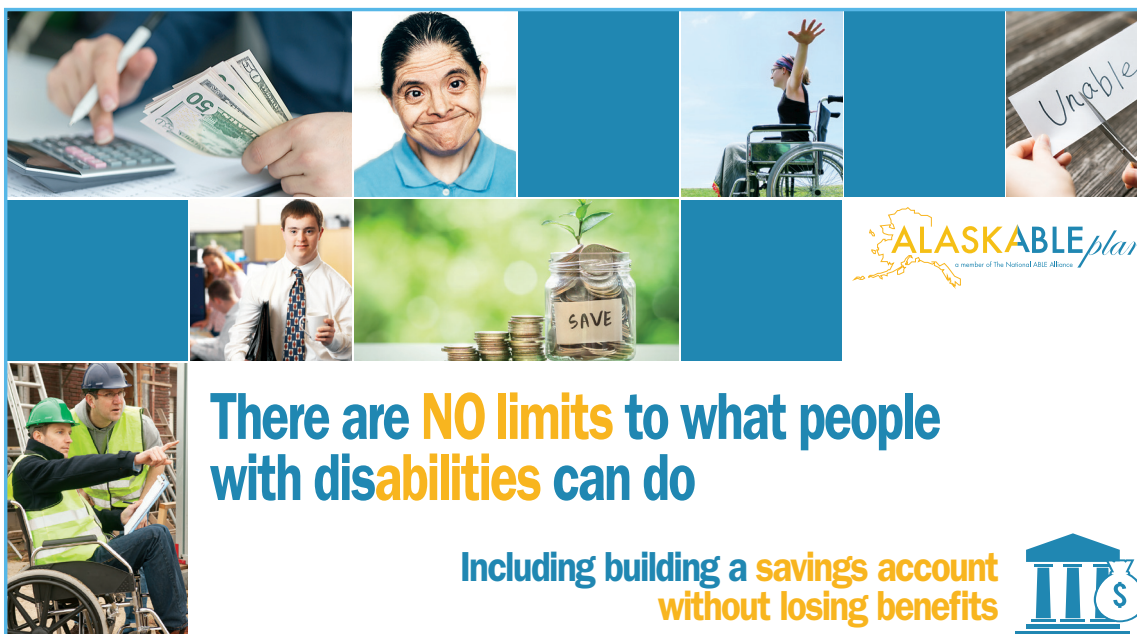
This automatically moves funds from one investment option to another.

### What is a Systematic Withdrawal?

This is a way of making automatic withdrawals when you would like to use your account to make payments each month. You can make systematic withdrawals to the bank listed on your account by mail to your address or to a third party.



### What is an investment?

An asset or item purchased with the hope of future gains.



**There are NO limits to what people with disabilities can do**

**Including building a savings account without losing benefits**





# Employment Smart Technology Tools

## Time Management:

- **Alarms** on iPad or phone
- **Timer** on iPad or phone
- **Calendar App** add events and set reminder alerts with repeat options
- **Reminders App** add tasks with alerts with repeat options

## Budgeting:

- **Pocket Expense** keep track of income and expenses to help set up budgets

## Interview Skills:

- **iMovie** create video resumes for job interviews
- **Story Kit** (iPhone App) type in script voice communication needs

## Visual Checklist:

- **Picture Scheduler** pictures or videos
- **Google Doc** create checklist
- **Story Kit** create page by page steps

## Communication:

- **Story Kit** audio recording for students with communication needs
- **Skype or Facetime** video conferencing
- **Contacts** contacts of people
- **Email & SMS Templates Lite** create scripts for email (calling off of work, etc.)
- **Message Templates**

## Google:

- **Gmail** professional email for employers
- **Google Docs** create Microsoft word documents (resumes, cover letters, etc)
- **Google Sheets** create spreadsheets, record data
- **Google Slides** create slide-shows

### De-stressing:

- **Calm Counter**
- **Pandora** online radio
- **Flow**

### Job Search:

- **Indeed** online or app
- **SnagaJob** online videos of tips for interviews, job search, job retention, etc.
- **SnagaJob** app that assist with searching for jobs

### Accessibility on iPads-iPhones: in settings

- **Enlarged text**
- **Text to speech**
- **Zoom**
- **Hearing aids**
- **Captions**



# Self-Employment Resources

## Microenterprise

These grants strive to increase access to self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who are Trust beneficiaries. Grant funds may be used for costs associated with starting a new business, expanding a current business or acquiring an existing business.

### Eligibility

- Recipient must qualify as a Trust beneficiary. (See page 36).
- The business must meet the definition of a microenterprise, which is a business with total capital needs of not more than \$35,000 with fewer than five employees.
- Allowable costs include but are not limited to: business license, insurance, permits, inventory, raw materials to make a product, equipment, supplies, rent or lease for space to offer a service or product, utilities, furnishings, marketing activities, transportation costs not related to vehicle purchases, accounting services and training/support services.

To apply for the grant please visit the University of Alaska Anchorage, Center for Human Development, Microenterprise Grant: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/megrant/index.cshml>

## Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)

SBDCs provide assistance to help small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs throughout the United States and its territories. SBDCs help entrepreneurs realize the dream of business ownership and help existing businesses remain competitive in a complex ever-changing global marketplace. SBDCs are hosted by leading universities and state economic development agencies, and funded in part through a partnership with Small Business Administration (SBA). SBDC advisors provide aspiring and current small business owners a variety of free business consulting and low-cost training services including: business plan development, manufacturing assistance, financial packaging and lending assistance, exporting and importing support, disaster recovery assistance, procurement and contracting aid, market research help, 8(a) program support and healthcare guidance.

Please visit the site for more information: <https://aksbdc.org/>

# Success Stories

## Lucy Odden

Lucy: My name is Lucy Odden, in March 2016, I was presented with two awards from the regional director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and I have received the prestigious APSE Personal Achievement National Award. APSE is a national organization that supports Employment First throughout the United States. In the past 35 years, not only have I earned the right to work, but also I have received several honors for my workmanship.

My in-school transition job was putting returned books back in place at the library. For my postsecondary education, I went to King Career Center for training to work with kids. After the training, I took an internship at the Kiddie Care Center in Mountain View. This was not the best job for me. Then, I moved to the Anchorage Community College for office work training for 8 months, where I was involved in office services training.

After that, I went to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a student receptionist and later a Xerox operator. I became an office clerk after that filing paperwork. I have worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 30 years.

In the 35 years I have been a self-advocate, I have sat on many different State of Alaska and nonprofit agency boards. Some of these include: the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, I am co-president for Alaska's APSE chapter, I was on the board for the Anchorage Special Olympics, and I had the honor of serving on the ARC Anchorage Board of Directors for 2 years. These are only some of the boards I have sat on. I also am on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Civil Rights and Diversity team for my current job, and we have won several awards.





# Success Stories

## Ric Nelson

Ric: My name is Ric Nelson and I have Cerebral Palsy (CP). Since birth, I was told I would not succeed in life. This is far from the truth. I graduated from high school in the top 10% of my graduating class and received a full-ride academic scholarship to the University of Alaska Anchorage. With this scholarship in hand, I obtained an associates degree in Small Business Management and a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Meanwhile, I was serving on several self-advocacy boards for the State of Alaska.

I served on the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) for eight years. During my service with the Council, I climbed my way up the ladder to become the Chair of the Council in my last two years. This time in my life was very busy as I was also a graduate student with the University of Alaska, Southeast. I obtained my Master's degree in Public Administration and received the prestigious Top 40 Under 40 Award for all my hard and dedicated work for people with disabilities in the State of Alaska. With all the education and experience I achieved, I was hired in a staff position at the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

I am currently working as an Employment Program Coordinator with the Council for the State of Alaska. For over a year now, I have truly enjoyed my position as it has given me opportunities to serve and advocate across the state and country. I have helped and advised a nonprofit self-advocacy organization called Peer Power. I am also a staff member for several committees for the Council and have received honors from the National Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), the National Personal Achievement Award 2016.





# Success Stories

## Maggie Winston

Maggie: Hi! My name is Maggie Winston and I live in Kenai, Alaska. I have always enjoyed working. In fact, I got my first job when I was 12 working at a music store. I worked all throughout high school at different fast food restaurants, and decided to go to vocational school after graduation where I learned to do hair and nails and became a licensed cosmetologist. However, after contracting a spinal cord injury from a rare autoimmune disease, I no longer had the use of my arms or legs and became unable to work... Or so I thought.

Utilizing DVR services, I decided to go to college where I earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. Though it took years of struggling, tutoring, health conditions and barrier after barrier, it taught me other people need help with these services as well. Fortunately, now I am able to apply what I have learned as I work in my job as a Systems Advocate for the Independent Living Centers of the Kenai Peninsula. I get to help people with disabilities remove barriers from their own lives!





# Success Stories

## Taylor Buchanan

Taylor: Hi, my name is Taylor Buchanan and I live in Anchorage, Alaska. I went out-of-state for a period of time and came back to Alaska, studied hard and graduated from East High School with honors in 2011. When I was in high school I was involved with Partners Club and Special Olympics swimming. Once I graduated I wanted to work, so I applied to be in the ACE and ACT Program. I got the interview and was selected, and I excelled by leaps and bounds. Then Project SEARCH was brought to my attention and I applied for the program, and I was accepted. While I was at Project SEARCH they put me in continued training where I did fantastic. After I completed the program then I applied with Providence Hospital in the New Born Intensive Care Unit (NICU).



I was hired as a Cleaning Equipment Tech in the NICU at the age of 22; I have now been working there for the past two-and-a-half years. They are very understanding and helpful if I need accommodations for my job; they have no problem providing it to me. I really love my job. My job duties at the NICU are to clean all of the equipment, stock the carts, check the expiration dates on the equipment and fold all of the nurse gowns. My favorite job duty is when they hire a new staff member for the same job and I get to supervise and train them. In 2016, I was awarded a Fireweed Angel for my hard work and dedication, and I plan to continue to dedicate myself to my job. My favorite thing about my job is interacting with my co-workers every day. I want to thank Project SEARCH and all of my teachers who pushed me to succeed in what I love to do.





# Self Employment Success Story

## Rebecca Allely

Rebecca: I am Rebecca Allely. I am 37 years old. I currently own and operate my microenterprise business named “Becca’s Alpacas.” It received funding with a microenterprise grant. My journey started by attending the Camphill Special School in Pennsylvania for five years. The school has a small class size structure that focuses on hands-on learning experiences. In essence, the school is a 70-acre farm with communal type living accommodations for the students and staff. There I had opportunities to learn work skills in the afternoons, such as weaving, land work, animal care, and packaging food in the store for delivery to the houses on the property. Camphill’s approach is to explore and nourish the gifts each individual has and provide opportunities to flourish.

After leaving Pennsylvania, I returned to Alaska, attended the ACT program, and worked at food service and janitorial type jobs. I did not feel this was meaningful employment for me. I realized that I wanted to work in a job which would allow me to be my own boss and work in an occupation that interests me. I have always enjoyed working with animals and crafts. Therefore, with the strong support of my providers, family and others I started “Becca’s Alpacas,” which is a micro-enterprise that cares for alpacas which provides me with fleece for spinning into yarn for sale. I really enjoy and love working at my company and plan on expanding the amount of products I sell.

If I would have had a good transition plan before I left school it would have helped me establish some goals for employment. I absolutely love my business and feel I now have achieved a meaningful life. I encourage others who are still in school to make sure you develop a Transition Plan, which focuses on goals that are realistic to achieve and are in an area of employment that you would enjoy. Watch Rebecca’s story: <https://vimeo.com/229304979>



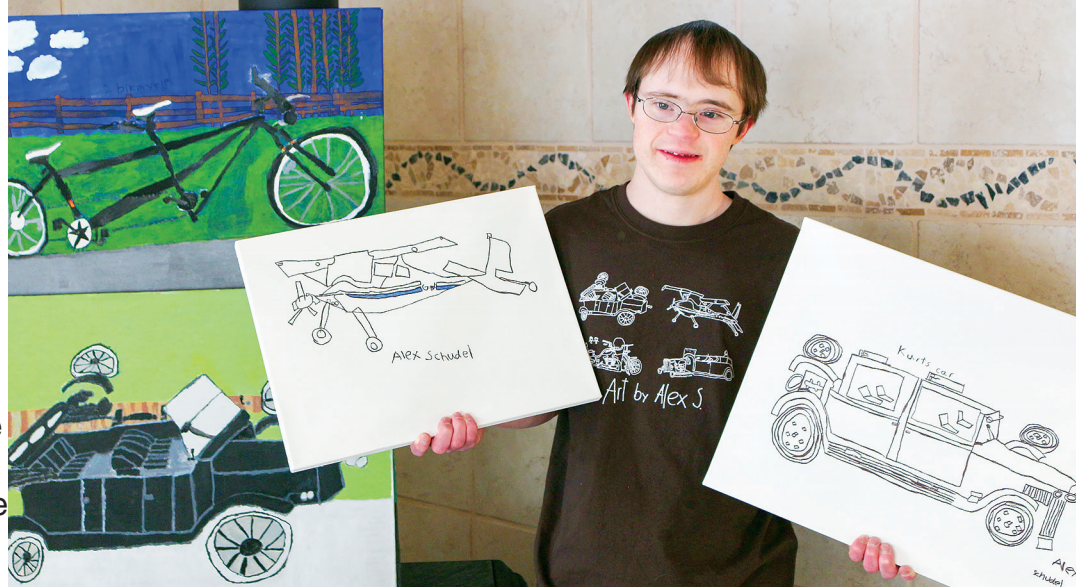


# Self Employment Success Story

## Alex Schudel

Alex: Alex Schudel is 28 years young. “A young man who enjoys life in Alaska with Down syndrome,” as he likes to say. With several generations of artists in the family, his mother Karen suspected he had this hidden talent as well. The question was, how to get the talent to surface? Drawing a picture of his uncle’s airplane for a thank you note (after going for a ride) led Alex

to a new hobby. He began to draw his favorite things at home. If you asked, “What are Alex’s favorite things?” the answer would be, “Vehicles, of course!” Many of his drawings have been ‘thank you’ gifts to friends and family. He has been a lucky guy to go for rides or happily just sit in many awesome machines. He has checked some vehicles off his bucket list, such as a snow cat, a back hoe, a Cessna airplane, as well as riding in a motor grader, a helicopter and a fire truck. The list goes on. He will Google any type vehicle that comes to mind, study the details a few minutes, and he is on his way sketching. He is content working on some drawings for four hours straight or longer. First he sketches it out, then darkens the lines with a fine tip marker, and then adds the color. His portfolio and confidence are growing fast, as well as his to-do list of future sketches. His family is proud that he is carrying on the talent of expression in the arts. Alex has been attending two art programs that center on adults with disabilities. Focus Art allows their artists to explore many different types of art mediums. Various local galleries and coffee shops have displayed their artist’s work. SPARC (through the ARC) has various classes as well (e.g. pottery, painting, sculpture, silk screen). Both programs are very supportive in sharing the talent of many artists with intellectual disabilities with the community.





## Parent Success Story

Alma: Having a child who had a disability was difficult in the 1980s. The resources were not as abundant or available. I knew of some resources at the elementary school like speech therapy and occupational therapy, but I was never told about other available resources. It was not a question of whether or not my child needed resources, it was knowing what questions to ask. After our family moved to Alaska, we made friends with personal care assistants and other people in the disability field. They were able to help guide us as we asked new questions concerning my son's care and education.



As Ric got older, people in his Individual Education Plan team started asking what his dreams and goals were. He said that he wanted to be a photographer, doctor, lawyer or a film director. I always envisioned him going to college and using his degree to achieve employment in a career of his choosing. I always knew he would speak up for others with disabilities because I taught him that he could be a voice for others who had difficulty speaking up for themselves. Many programs did not believe he could succeed. We knew with the right support, he could be anything he wanted to be, but we were told he should own and stock vending machines for a living. However, we encouraged him to fight for what he wanted. We insisted he was destined for greater things. We insisted he should pursue HIS dreams. That is why he enrolled in college.

It took Ric a little bit longer to get his degree, but he pushed through many obstacles and graduated. Now he is a successful advocate for people who are experiencing hardships of their own. When I am asked how I did it, I just say that I treated my son like anybody else would treat his or her son. I dreamed with him. I pushed him. I loved him. We are very proud of the man he has become. His accomplishments are a result of his hard work and determination.





## Teacher Success Story

Cindy: Project SEARCH is a program where we see students grow before our eyes. This one-year employment transition program for students with disabilities has transformed students who were unsure of themselves and unsure of what they had to offer, into confident young men and women who know they can contribute to their communities through competitive employment. We watch students begin to walk taller, communicate clearer, smile more often and perform better as they progress. By the end of the one year, these interns have risen to meet and exceed expectations. When job offers begin to come in, we celebrate with tears and cheers. As one student said to me, "I never thought I could do it, but now I know I can." For me, that statement is the goal for each student who walks into our program.



## Business Employment Story

Cathy: I am Cathy Babuscio the Human Resources Director for Mat-Su Regional Hospital. Over ten years ago, we began hiring people with disabilities to work at our hospital. Six years ago we began to participate in Project SEARCH to intern employees with disabilities. Now the hospital is hiring 30 percent of all Project SEARCH interns for the Mat-Su. We gained three employees who became employed by us through the Project SEARCH programs. All of this has worked out well above our initial expectations. Early on, we discovered that 10 percent of our workforce has family members with disabilities. In the beginning, we conducted an employee satisfaction survey, which resulted in only 23 percent of our employees feeling satisfied in their jobs. Since hiring people with disabilities, our subsequent employee satisfaction surveys resulted in an increase to 43 percent and later to 47 percent.





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# Peer Power Alaska

Peer Power is a self-advocacy group supported by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, the Center for Human Development and the Disability Law Center of Alaska. The goal and purpose of the organization is to help self advocates become empowered. We work on such issues as: improving the lives of people with disabilities with increased employment opportunities, self-advocate mentoring, funding resources for the group and raising disability awareness throughout the community. The group is comprised of elected board members, most of whom have an Intellectual or Developmental Disability (I/DD), and area regional representatives throughout the State of Alaska.



## Our Mission:

To advocate for the civil rights of people who experience Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities, who will further a movement of self-advocates building communities that respect their choices.

## For More Information:

Contact Peer Power to get involved:

[peerpower907@gmail.com](mailto:peerpower907@gmail.com)

P.O. Box 220292

Anchorage, AK 99522

<https://www.peerpower907.com>

Facebook: [facebook.com/PeerPower907](https://www.facebook.com/PeerPower907)



## Self-Advocacy Summit

Every fall, Peer Power hosts a statewide Self-Advocacy Summit.

Check out the [Peer Power Facebook page](#) for more details on the next summit, how you can apply (which includes travel costs), and how to get involved.





## Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

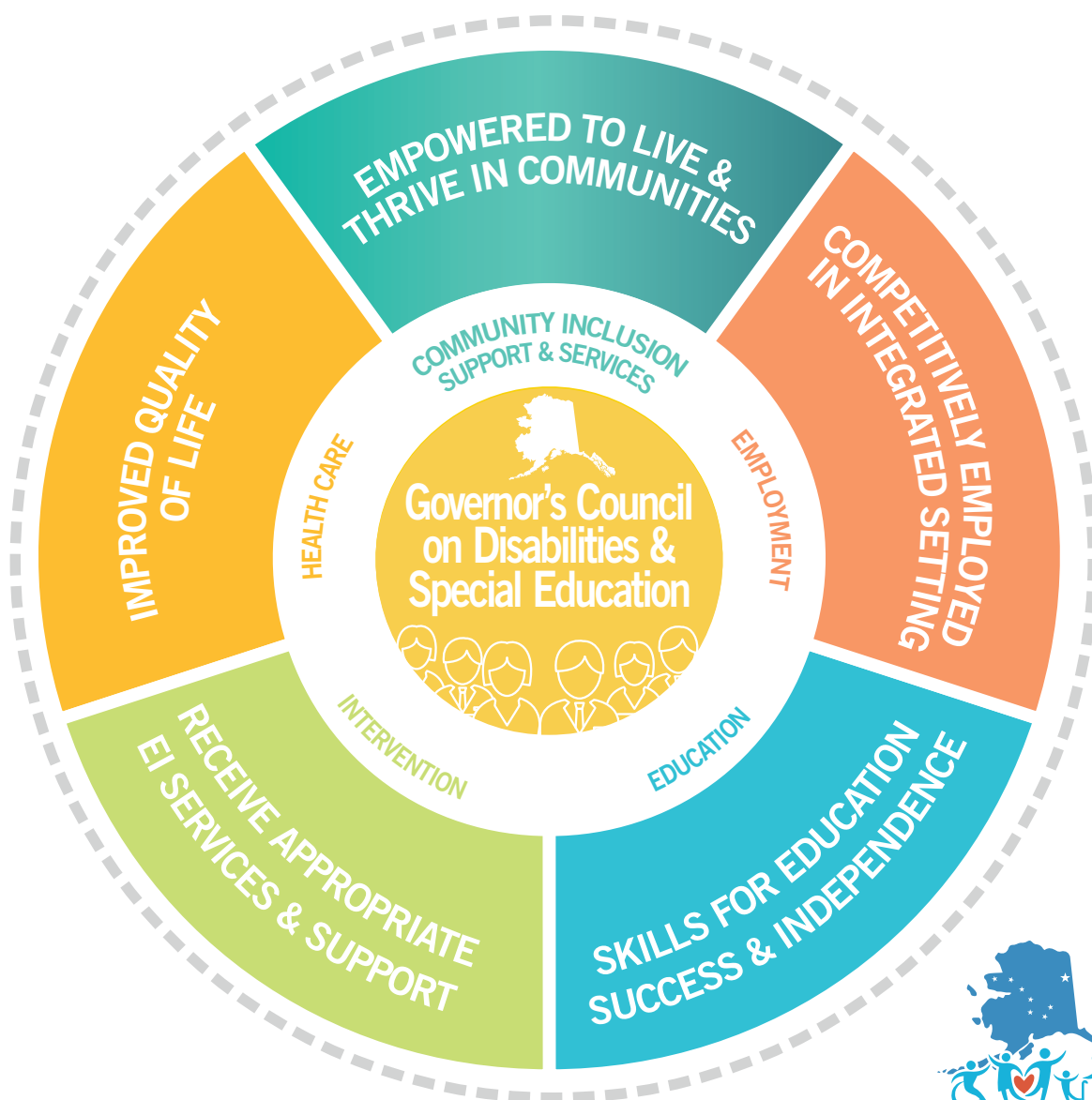
The mission of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) is to create change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities. The Council was first established in 1978 through the Alaska Legislature to meet the requirements of several state and federal laws. The Council combines the expertise and experience of many stakeholders throughout the state into one unique Council. The Council works to make systems change in the following ways: Recommend changes in statute, regulation, policy and/or procedures, build capacity and coordinate advocacy activities.

- As the State Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with disabilities and their families receive the services they need and participate in the design of those services.
- As the Special Education Advisory Panel, the Council advises the Department of Education and Early Development on the provision of special education and related services for children with disabilities from ages 3 through 21.
- As the Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, the Council advises the state's early intervention program on the coordination and provision of quality early intervention services for children with disabilities from birth to age 3.
- The Council also serves as the majority of the governing board for the Special Education Service Agency, which provides training and consultation to Alaska school districts serving children with low incidence disabilities.
- Additionally, the Council serves as a beneficiary board of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority advising The Trust on the status, conditions and needs of Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.



## Our Focus

Every five years the Council is asked by the federal government to write a plan. Planning helps the Council focus on what is most important to Alaskans with disabilities. The Council's selection of goals is based on information members gathered from meetings with individuals around the state, as well as public testimony, recommendations from the Council's committees, meetings with providers, personal experiences of the Council members and duties assigned by state regulation.





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Governor Mike Dunleavy

Department of Health  
Heidi Hedberg, Commissioner

**Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education**  
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