



Secondary Transition

The Importance of Employment: Why Work?

Discuss the following with your son or daughter:

Work is an important part of people's lives. It means more than just getting paid. It means being able to make your own choices about how you want to live your life.

At work, it's what people **can** do that matters. If you are a young person with a disability, only you can decide your limits. You can work in a wide variety of jobs and play an important role in America's economy. In fact, experience with a disability can help in a job or in starting a business.

Today more than ever, businesses need people who can think differently about how to solve problems and get the job done. People with disabilities do this in America's workplaces every day – and so can you.

It's not just about the paycheck. Work makes people happier. Whether a job is paid or unpaid, people who work tend to:

- **Meet people and expand their social networks.** Work acts as a training opportunity to develop

and improve social skills and develop friendly and supportive relationships. The support provided by co-workers can change someone's life experience from one of isolation to one of feeling part of a community.

- **Feel productive and valued**, knowing that they are making important contributions.
- **Develop new skills**, both work and nonwork related. For example, some individuals with disabilities become comfortable with traveling independently, once learning to travel to and from their job.
- **Transfer learned skills** into employment, volunteering, and community-based experiences.
- **Build a solid foundation** to advance their goals and their future.
- **Be healthier and happier** than people who are unemployed.

Set your sights high! Along the way, remember that resources are available to help you seek employment, succeed on the job, and understand your right to be judged on your ability, not disability.

What Can You Do? The Campaign for Disability Employment

<http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/index.php>

Work helps you gain a sense of pride and self-satisfaction by reaffirming that you can support yourself. With work, you earn money to cover bills and pay for activities in your leisure time.

It's becoming more common to see people with disabilities in a wide range of jobs throughout the

community. Significant barriers to employment still exist, but progress is being made. Individuals with even the most severe disabilities have shown that they can be successful at work, changing their lives and changing the way people with disabilities are viewed in society.

Pennsylvania Work Incentives Planning Assistance

Most people don't know that when a person qualifies for disability-related benefits from the Social Security Administration (Social Security), such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), it does not mean they cannot work. For transition-aged youth, Social Security offers specific work incentives that might help them while in high school or college.

Work Incentives Planning Assistance (WIPA), sponsored by Social Security, is a free service provided to the student or family. Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWIC) undergo national certification and must also meet federal security clearance to ensure that this service is provided by trained and trustworthy professionals. The goal of the WIPA program is to enable beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work, and to support working beneficiaries to make a successful transition to financial independence.

Each WIPA project has CWICs who will:

- Provide in-depth counseling about benefits and the effect of work on those benefits
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- Work in cooperation with federal, state, and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve SSI and SSDI beneficiaries with disabilities.

For more information:

Western Pennsylvania

AHEDD: 866-902-4333 x62001

Central Pennsylvania

Goodwill Keystone: 888-960-9675

Eastern Pennsylvania

Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania:
800-692-7443 x309

Or contact

Social Security:

<http://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html>

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is a free and voluntary program offered by the Social Security Administration that can help people age 18 through 64 who receive Social Security disability benefits and are interested in returning to work or working for the first time. By participating, you or someone you know who is interested in working receives support throughout your journey to financial independence. You can participate in the Ticket to Work through the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and/or approved Employment Networks. For more information about the Ticket, call the Help Line at 1-866-968-7842.