



# AJE UPDATE

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## Inside This Issue

### Healthcare Transition.....1

### Transition from Part C to Part B of IDEA.....2

### Post-Secondary Transition Plan.....3

### After High School.....4

## Our Mission

The mission of AJE is to educate parents, youth, and the community about the laws governing public education, specifically for children with special needs. We seek to empower youth and parents to be effective advocates and youth to self advocate to ensure that children receive an appropriate education. It is also our mission to make the public aware of the consequences of institutional negligence of children with or without disabilities to promote school accountability.

## About AJE

AJE is home to the Parent Training and Information Center, DC Health Information Center, and the DC Parent Center.

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## Healthcare Transition

Youth with disabilities can experience unique challenges when transitioning to adult life. For example, depending on the specifics of the individual's disability, some young adults have had little experience doing things alone. Or, because they have needed specialized supports for many years, they wonder if that means they will never really be a "grown up."

Becoming an adult is a scary but exciting moment in a youth's life. Finishing high school and getting a job are not the only changes: getting older means your health care needs may change too. Eventually, you will need adult-centered care that can focus on meeting the variety of needs adults have.

### Here are 10 steps to make toward adult health care:

1. Start early - Plan ahead!
2. Know how to explain your health care needs. Make a list of all the things you need to keep yourself healthy.
3. Keep a record of your appointments, important medical history, phone number of doctors and your medications.
4. Begin to make your own medical appointments.
5. Write down questions for your doctor or nurse practitioner before your visit.
6. Spend time alone with your doctor or nurse practitioner to discuss your health concerns.
7. Learn about your health insurance and health care finances.
8. Talk to your pediatric doctor or nurse practitioner about when is a good time for you to transfer your care.
9. See your primary care provider on a regular basis to help.
10. Meet adult providers before you begin your transitions.

*For further information please visit: The Adolescent Health Transition Project (AHTP) at <http://depts.washington.edu/healthtr/process/learning.html>.*

## Policy Updates

As DCPS closes schools (Prospect Learning Center) and merges schools (Sharpe Health and Mamie D. Lee schools) and continues to bring students back from non-public placements, we as a community need to make sure that the changes are an opportunity to advocate for the best programming and placements for students. As we consolidate we must ensure that programs, staffing and schools are fully funded to meet the needs of all students they serve. I would like to encourage you to reach out to AJE, your school, and the new Education Committee of the DC Council to make sure your voices are being heard. The upcoming budget hearings are a wonderful place to raise questions, concerns and give feedback. If you are interested in sharing your story please contact AJE and we can help you in this process.

Also, in policy updates, the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) decided whether they will give fast track approval to two companies to open up a number of blended learning schools (combining regular classroom

and on-line learning models). AJE testified that one of the companies, the for-profit K12, Inc, which has a dismal record across the country of serving students, not be approved to open a charter in the District. The state of Georgia is shutting down K12, Inc., schools for violating the rights of students with disabilities. While providing options to parents are important, so is ensuring that those options are high quality and effective.

AJE is a member of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), a nationwide coalition of community agencies, parents groups, and student organizations that are working to end school exclusions (suspension and expulsion). DSC hosted their national meeting here in D.C. on March 1-3rd. School suspension and expulsion disproportionately affects students with special needs and students of color – in DC and around the country. If this is an issue you would like to learn more about – please contact AJE and we can share information about this important conference.

## Turning Eighteen: Transfer of Educational Rights in the D.C.

As parents many of us chose to continue to care for and be responsible for our children in many ways, even after they have reached the age of majority. (This is generally 18 in most states.) It comes with the territory of parenthood. However, parents soon learn there are changes to their ability to make educational decisions on behalf of their children once they reach the age of 18.

District of Columbia law provides for the automatic transfer of educational rights at age 18 to students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEP) (unless the student has been declared legally incompetent by a court of law and placed under guardianship). What this means is that students then hold all the rights that parents once held on their behalf.

### What the Law Requires:

- Beginning at least one year before a child with a disability reaches the age of 18, their IEP must include a statement that they have been informed of the rights under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that will transfer to him or her on turning 18.
- The school must notify both the student and the parents of the transfer of rights.

- After the transfer of rights, all notices required by IDEA must be provided to both student and parents, for example, parents still should receive notice of IEP meetings.

All other rights given to parents transfer to the student, including students who are in correctional facilities.

### What Parents and Students Can Do:

Guardianship is an option under D.C. law that is available when a student may not be capable of making an informed decision at the age of 18. Only a court can determine if a student is legally incompetent. Guardianship is a serious step and is usually the last resort. Just because a student has a disability does not mean they are incompetent to make decisions for themselves. Obtaining guardianship is not an easy thing to obtain because most students with disabilities are not likely to qualify for it. However, some students may not feel comfortable with the idea of now having to make educational decisions on their own. Here are some options to help ease the decision making transition:

1. Parents can begin to prepare their children to make choices on their own by:

- Involving their child in IEP and transition planning early and make sure his/her voice is heard
- Discussing important decisions with their child ahead of meetings so that he/she is informed and prepared to participate
- Including their child in all decisions that impact his/her life, in and out of school

2. Students who turn 18 may sign a power of attorney appointing his/her parent the right to make educational decisions on his/her behalf. The student has the right to terminate the agreement at anytime and resume his/her right to make educational decisions.
3. Just as parents have the right to include anyone with knowledge of the student as a member of the IEP team, upon transfer of rights, so does the student. The student has the right then to include his/her parents as members of the IEP team.

## Transition from Part C to Part B of IDEIA: What Parents Should Know

*Guest Writer: Early Stages*

### What are Parts C and B?

Under the federal special education law called "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act" (IDEIA), children under the age of three fall under the provisions of Part C, and children over the age of 3 fall under Part B.

### Who does what in the District?

In D.C., the Part C agency is Strong Start, and the Part B DCPS agency is Early Stages. Independent Charter Schools are also considered Part B agencies.

Strong Start is D.C.'s Part C Early Intervention Program for children from birth to three years old.

Early Stages is the DC Public Schools diagnostic center for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 5 years 10 months. We help identify any delays a child may have and arrange services to address them – and this includes families that come to us from Strong Start. All of our services are free.

### What is the transition process?

Transition is a process to determine whether children currently receiving services through Part C are eligible for services through Part B, and if so, to ensure a smooth transfer from Part C to Part B, so that there is no gap in services.

### Is DCPS the only option for my child to receive Part B services?

No. Each family can decide which Local Education Agency (LEA), or school district, they want to work with. When a family chooses DCPS as the school district, Early Stages will partner with Strong Start to usher the family through the transition process. If a family is enrolled in an Independent Charter, then that charter is responsible for the transition process.

### When does a child transition from Part C to Part B?

A child typically begins the transition process out of Part C into Part B when a child turns 2 years, 7

months. If eligible for special education services under Part B, the child must be receiving services by his/her third birthday.

### If my child is receiving services under Part C, will my child automatically receive services under Part B?

No. Special education services under Part B will only be offered to your child if your child is found eligible after going through the Early Stages process.

Additionally, if your child is eligible for services under Part B, the services DCPS offers may differ from those offered from Strong Start.

## Difference between an IFSP and an IEP

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are documents that support the developmental and educational needs of children and youth with disabilities. The IFSP explains the services for children birth through age 2. This document heavily involves the family of the child, and professionals from various disciplines. The IFSP focuses on (a) the child's current level of development, (b) outcomes for the child and family, and (c) services the child and family will receive to help them achieve their outcomes. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is the federal law that protects the rights of children and youth with disabilities, states that services in the IFSP are to be provided in the child's "natural setting." A child's natural setting may include their home, Head Start site, preschool, or other community setting in which the child spends his or her time. Members of the IFSP team includes the parent/guardian, service coordinator, a person involved in

conducting evaluations, and other family members as requested by the parent. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) document explains the services that the local education agency (LEA) will provide to an eligible student between the ages of 3 to 21, with a disability classification under IDEA. The IEP includes (a) present levels of performance, (b) measurable objectives and goals for specialized instruction and related services, and (c) classroom aids and modifications that are needed for the child to access the general education curriculum. Members of the IEP team include the parent/guardian, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a professional who can interpret evaluation results (e.g. psychologist), other individuals who have knowledge or expertise about the child and the student (if the parent consents).

*Adapted from the PACER Center Action Information Sheet produced by the National Parent Center at PACER. [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)*

## Accessing Accommodations in College

A successful transition from high school to college is dependent on how one manages their disability. With a mix of self-determination and self-advocacy, students can succeed in the college classroom. By accessing the proper accommodations and having a good repertoire with professors, students can fully navigate the most effective strategies for studying and handling their workload.

According to Christy Willis, Director of Disability Support Services (DSS) at The George Washington University, "Making the decision to connect to campus resources is perhaps the best indicator of self-advocacy and responsibility." In order to get ready for college, there are a variety of tips to consider:

- The first step is contacting the Disability Services Office as soon as you enroll in a college. Many accommodations may take a significant amount of time to arrange. Therefore, doing it early can be incredibly beneficial.
- Scheduling a meeting with a representative from the school's disability support team will help determine the level of support needed, as well as organize placement exams and orientations.
- Make sure the documentation of your disability is current and that there is no missing documentation. Students must self-disclose in order to access accommodations.
- Legally, students are provided "equal access to education," but this doesn't translate to identical accommodations, IEP, or 504 Plan, that a student had in high school. Student initiative and independence are key to accessing the proper accommodations and services.
- In order to establish eligibility for classroom accommodations, many colleges require students to request letters to professors at each term in which the letter specifies the student's registration status in compliance with ADA/Section 504.
- Disability services may include: academic skills assistance, adaptive technology, classroom access, housing accommodations, interpreting services, LD/ADHD consultation, letters to professors, note-taking support, privileged registration, reading services, and test accommodations.
- The Disability Support Office provides a

wide range of services, but most do not offer diagnostic testing, content tutoring, or personal care assistance, such as assisting a person with daily living activities (e.g. pushing a wheelchair). This is the family's individual responsibility.

- Students can seek accommodations at any point in their educational career, but it is recommended to do so at the early stages. However, if a student chooses to take an exam without accommodations and performs poorly, that grade will stand. It benefits students to access accommodations at the beginning of their college career.

Disability Support Services seeks to create an inclusive environment for students in order for them to better manage their course load and selection, learning strategies, organization and time management, as well as self-advocacy. Properly accessing accommodations can lead to a successful educational career and comfortable transition from high school.

## What is a Post-Secondary Transition Plan?

A post-secondary Transition Plan is used to outline the necessary supports that the local education agency will provide to a youth with a disability to be prepared to enter adult life after they leave high school. The transition plan focuses on the following areas: education, training, employment and independent living.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA), a student should have a transition plan as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) no later than when that student turns 16. A transition plan can be developed if the youth is younger than 16, if determined appropriate by the IEP team. The plan must be updated annually. A transition plan must also include appropriate and measurable post-secondary goals related to the aforementioned areas. The goals in the plan should

be based upon completion of an age-appropriate transition assessment in the respective areas. The transition services that are needed to support the child to achieve the goals that have been identified should be documented in the transition plan.

*For additional resources or supports regarding your child's Transition Plan, please contact us at (202) 678-8060.*



**Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.**  
**The Parent Training and Information Center of the District of Columbia**  
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## Children with Special Needs, need Parents with Special Skills!

*AJE's office on Georgia Avenue, NW has changed. To speak with an AJE staff, you may visit our Intake Help Desk within Mary's Center at 3912 Georgia Avenue, NW, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am to 5pm. You may also visit our central office and resource library, located at 1012 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. The office hours are Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. To reach us by phone, please call 202.678.8060.*

## AJE UPDATE

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### After High School.....What's NEXT???

What's next after high school? Are you looking for work? Do you dream of going to nursing school? Do you want to get your feet wet and take a couple of classes before you figure out what you want to major in? Do you want to fight for your country? Do you love doing hair? After high school, it can be tough trying to figure out what's next. You have to decide whether you want to go to college, go to the military, or go straight to work on getting your career started. You have several options available to you. You can go to a community college, find a job, enter a trade/vocational program, or go to the military.

#### Trade/Vocational Programs

Some individuals are interested in being a certified plumber, an electrician, or a mechanic. Others are interested in cosmetology or fixing computers. Enrolling at a trade school can get you started in your career without going to a university. Trade schools focus specifically on the trade that you will be practicing in. The programs vary in length, but they are typically shorter than going to a four year university. Some community colleges also offer trade programs. Listed below are a few of the trade/vocational programs in DC.

Please contact them for more information.

- Latin American Youth Center Career Academy, 202.319.2228
- Workforce Development Program at UDC-CC, 202.274.7331
- Dudley Beauty College, 202.269.3666.

#### Employment

Looking to enter the employment field after high school? First, you want to make sure that you have all of the tools to market yourself to prospective employers.

Creating a resume and a cover letter will make you stand out. If you need help creating a resume, try [www.resume.com](http://www.resume.com), a free resume builder website. If you do not have any work experience, add your community service from high school to your resume. Once you create your resume and cover letter, you are now ready to search for that perfect job. If you are having trouble looking for jobs, you can always check the local government jobs page or job search engines such as [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com) or [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com).

#### Community Colleges

Community colleges are a great idea if you want to experience the college life without actually enrolling in a four year program. You have the opportunity to earn a two year Associates Degree. If you don't want to earn an Associates Degree, you can also earn credits towards your Bachelors Degree. Taking electives or general education classes at a four year university can be expensive so why not save a few dollars by taking those classes in the community college? In DC, the University of the District of Columbia Community College (UDC-CC) [www.cc.udc.edu](http://www.cc.udc.edu), provides an array of

#### Universities

There are several major universities in the District of Columbia. If you are interested in attending a four-year university, here are a few options to research: University of the District of Columbia (UDC), Trinity Washington University, Howard University, Catholic University, American University and George Washington University.