



## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

### Transition from School to Adult Life

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

For children with special needs such as autism spectrum disorders, the more proactive you can be in planning long term, the less overwhelmed families and children will be, and the less anxiety producing it will be in the long run.

One thing that families can do for an individual is come up with goals that the family feels is important to them as a whole and to the child or adolescent as an individual. “Is this a person who will one day live independently? Is this a person who will live partially independently?” That can be then the guiding force for many other decisions that come after it. If a child would be able to live independently nearby a family member, if a child would need assistance, that may be planning that needs to begin at a younger age because waitlists for assisted community based living facilities are quite long and can be many years and to start looking for something at the age of eighteen can take five, ten years. That’s just the reality.

An IEP, an Individualized Education Plan, is provided by the school district for children who are classified and children with autism spectrum disorders are classified by the school districts. This can include, and does include by law, transition planning for children exiting high school. This should start in the earlier teen years. The agencies that can help with that are vocational rehab agencies. There are other agencies with job coaches who can help children with special needs transition into employment. They can also help children who are transitioning to college access services at the college level such as tutoring programs, help navigating scheduling, and other issues that college students face.

If at twelve years old you can begin to teach self help skills both at home and in the school setting with the help of the IEP, children will be set up on a path to more independent living if it’s within their capabilities. If you teach a twelve year old to do a load of laundry, first with you then by slowly moving out of the picture and giving them more steps to do each time, that’s a skill that they will have mastered at a younger age, if it’s within their capabilities. If an individual child is not capable of doing a load of laundry on their own, perhaps the family can then start with a smaller task such as making the bed, or emptying the garbage, but small tasks promote independence and they promote self confidence in any child.

The bigger picture, think of all of the areas that it takes to live independently; money management, transportation, social skills, self help skills, personal hygiene, all of those areas need to be looked at as individual areas that may or may not be a strength for this child and the weaknesses are then those areas that can be worked on again through the IEP while the child's still in school and at home with the family.

One of the tricky things about self advocacy is it starts with self. So adolescents need to be taught, many times by family members or by teachers, that while things were often given to them through their IEP's in the younger years, now that they are young adults they have to search out services and search out agencies and groups that may be of help to them and that is sometimes very difficult for children with autism who tend to be more centered on self and its hard for them to reach out to different groups or unfamiliar settings , so that can be a challenge that families can start working with in younger children, helping them reach out.

As children and parents age together, there are also many things to consider in that regard. "Is this a child who will be able to make their own decisions regarding medical care, health care, transportation? Is this a child who will need someone to help with those decisions?" That's called guardianship and individuals over the age of eighteen who may need help with these matters need to have a legal guardian appointed. This can be a lengthy and expensive process so that is something families should begin to look at at the ages of sixteen or seventeen. There is also the matter of financial planning for this individual who will in all likelihood outlive his or her parents. In that same vein if this child outlives his or her parents who will then take care of that child?

Another area that is sometimes challenging for families is transitioning from pediatric health care to adult health care. Many children with autism visit developmental behavioral pediatricians, pediatric psychiatrists, pediatric psychologists and the transition to the adult health care and mental health care world is often very daunting . Hospitals such as ours and many other community hospitals and specialty hospitals can assist with this transition to adulthood, medicine and mental health services as well.

My take home message for concerned families would be, know what's out there. The internet is a phenomenal resource that we now have available to us. Go out there , look, call people, talk to people, don't be afraid to be a squeaky wheel. Sometimes that's who gets some help.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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