This brochure was developed for persons with brain injury, family members, caregivers, and friends to suggest ways to deal with the problems one may face when living with brain injury.

Preparing for Life After High School: The Next Steps

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*Additional sections/chapters added by the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey’s Children & Adolescents Committee
1. INTRODUCTION

Deciding what to do after high school is a challenge for any student. The choices are many—continuing education, getting vocational training, finding a job, or juggling part-time work and classes. It’s also at this time that many young people first think about moving away from home.

For students with traumatic brain injury (TBI), the basic transition challenges are the same as for any young person, yet they are usually more complex. A student whose injury is longstanding has more time to plan than a student who was injured only recently. For the recently injured student, the transition may be harder. Good planning greatly improves the chances that the move from high school to young adulthood will be a successful one.

This booklet describes the opportunities and resources available to students with brain injuries, their families, and others who care about them. It provides guidance on how to make a successful transition from high school student to young adult. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the student’s rights, of exploring options, of collaborative planning, and of flexibility.

At the end of the booklet is a list of general resources that will be helpful to all individuals living with traumatic brain injury (TBI). Resources on specific topics are listed at the end of each section.

A Four-Part Process

It is helpful to think of the transition process as having four parts. The parts are as follows:

1. **Know your rights.** Our society believes that people with disabilities and their parents have certain rights. Federal and state governments have passed laws to guarantee that Americans with disabilities, including TBI, enjoy these rights.

2. **Consider all the options.** Some students want to attend college after they leave high school. Others want to find a job. Still others choose to work and go to school at the same time. Many students may want to change their living situation.

3. **Make a plan.** No matter what option(s) a student chooses, setting realistic goals and evaluating progress toward those goals is essential. Planning and goal setting should begin as early as possible.

4. **Find an advocate.** An advocate is a person who can help locate resources that a student with TBI needs and who may help to coordinate needed services. The advocate may be a family member, friend, vocational rehabilitation professional, case manager, or another professional. As the student grows more independent and knowledgeable, he or she can become a self-advocate.
2. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Students with disabilities, including TBI, have distinct rights. These rights are guaranteed under federal and state laws. To the extent that students, their parents, and others understand these rights, the students will be able to take full advantage of the resulting benefits. If a student’s TBI occurred at birth, during childhood or early adolescence, chances are that parents and others are already aware of these laws. If the injury occurred only recently, parents and caregivers may be less familiar with them.

The following federal laws protect the rights of individuals with disabilities:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, as amended in 1997 and 2004
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA of 1990)

IDEA

The IDEA of 1990 and its amendments provide for a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities who have not received a regular high school diploma up to age 21.

IDEA requires the creation of an individualized education plan, or IEP, for each child who receives special education services. Parents and the student have the right to participate in and approve the IEP.

The first IEP is usually created when a child enters school. IEPs must be updated annually. Students are eligible to continue receiving these services until their 21st birthday or until they receive a regular high school diploma, whichever comes first.

Transition Planning under IDEA

Transition services are supports to help a student move from school to employment, further education, adult services, independent living, or other types of community participation. They are required under federal law for eligible children and youth.

The transition process usually begins when the student is around 14 years old. At this time, the student’s IEP team begins to make a transition plan. Members of this team include the student, their family, school representatives and outside agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation.

Transition planning is an important part of IEPs for older students. The first IEP that will be in effect when the student is 16 years of age must contain two things:

- Measurable goals for the student after high school. These goals are based on assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills; and
- A description of the transition services the student needs to reach those goals.

According to the IDEA, transition services are results oriented. They focus on improving a student’s academic and functional status. Transition services activities include:

- postsecondary education;
- vocational education;
• integrated employment (that is, in regular settings where they work alongside people without disabilities) including supported employment (integrated employment with continuing support from an agency experienced in finding work for the disabled);
• continuing and adult education;
• adult services (comprehensive social services that help disabled individuals live safely while maintaining as much independence as possible);
• independent living; and
• participation in community life.

Transition services are also based on the student's needs and take into account his or her strengths, preferences, and interests. They may include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Students with disabilities who don’t receive special education services in high school may need extra support during the transition period. These students, with the help of their family, advocate, and school staff, can take advantage of many of the services mentioned in this booklet.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA

After high school or at age 21, an individual is no longer eligible for services under IDEA. However, two other federal laws protect students with disabilities from discrimination: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA.

The Rehabilitation Act protects the civil rights of any student who is enrolled in a college, university, or other entity that receives federal funds. Section 504 requires that the states and the federal government make their programs and buildings accessible to people with disabilities. It provides for reasonable accommodations, defined as changes that enable a person with a disability to have equal opportunities with people who do not have a disability.

Examples of reasonable accommodations are: adding a ramp so people using wheelchairs can get into a building, changing work schedules, and providing interpreters. For example, a note-taker or audio recorder is a common accommodation for students with TBI who are enrolled in continuing education. It is the responsibility of the student to let the institution know that he or she has a disability and to request the accommodations needed.

The Rehabilitation Act also states that governments must make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to government jobs. For example, governments must provide devices or extra assistance to help people with disabilities do their jobs or apply for jobs.

The ADA extends the protections of Section 504 to public and private education, employment, state and local government offices, accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications, regardless of whether they receive federal funding. It makes certain types of discrimination against people with disabilities illegal.
The law requires that employers, business owners, and the government make reasonable changes to stop discriminating against people with disabilities. As with Section 504, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the institution, employer, or other entity about his or her disability and request the accommodations needed.

States vary in their laws that cover persons with disabilities and the services offered. Students and families should consult their schools for details.

**Disability Rights Resources**
A Basic Glossary: Legal Terms for People with Brain Injury.
Available from the Brain Injury Association of America, [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

A Guide to Disability Rights Laws provides concise descriptions of the laws described in this booklet as well as other laws, including the Fair Housing Act, that apply to individuals with disabilities. It is published by the U.S. Department of Justice.
Go to: [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm#anchor65610](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm#anchor65610)

### 3. CONSIDER ALL THE OPTIONS

The fundamental choice that students face as they think about life after high school is whether to continue their education, get a job, or balance work and school. Transition planning is centered on that key decision. This section covers what students and families should know about going to college and finding a job.

Although we often think of “finishing school,” we never really stop learning. Lifelong learning is a reality for everyone, whether going to a community or other college or getting a job. There are many formal and informal ways of continuing education. If a student has decided on continuing his/her education, a whole new range of options opens up.

**Among the formal educational options are:**
- community and other two-year colleges
- technical colleges
- trade schools
- training offered by disability-specific organizations
- adult education programs
- other non-degree programs
- four-year public and private colleges and universities

The student may also consider whether to attend part- or full-time, whether to work part-time, and where to live. For a student with disabilities who is exploring these choices, it’s important to make sure that support services are available, to plan for coping with the demands of work or continuing education, and to know how to adapt a plan if the situation changes.
Choosing an Educational Opportunity

The benefits and challenges of each educational choice need to be considered before deciding whether to go to school, and if so, which school to attend.

Some things to consider are:

- whether training for a specific job or a more broad education is desired;
- for specific job training, whether a community college or trade school program is best;
- the timing and duration of the program;
- the application and entrance requirements;
- the costs of participation and availability of financial assistance; and
- program location.

Answers to these and other questions are usually available on each school or program’s website. In addition, for students who want more information about two- and four-year colleges and universities, a service called College Opportunities On-Line provides the URLs (unique record locators) to thousands of trade and technical schools, as well as, two- and four-year colleges and universities in the United States (see resource list at the end of this section).

Community College

Community colleges often focus on the needs of a community, including training and education for employment. Many community colleges offer excellent disability support services. Community colleges tend to be very flexible and allow a student to simply take a class or two. Students can complete a trade, certificate, or associate degree programs, or prepare to transfer to a four-year college.

Trade or Technical Schools

Many students find training for a specific job at a trade school or technical college. Training for a wide range of jobs, such as mechanics, dental hygienists, welders, or nurses is generally available. Most trade schools accept federal funds and are required to provide services for students with disabilities.

Colleges and Universities

Four-year colleges and universities generally offer bachelor degree programs in a wide range of specialties or majors. Many also offer adult education classes and some allow students to take just one or two classes a semester.
Special Services to Help Meet the Demands of College

Entering college makes demands on a young student. The adjustment can be difficult. Most colleges and universities have disability support services (DSS) that provide or help arrange for information and referral, registration assistance, auxiliary aids (see Figure 1), and academic accommodation. DSS staff may serve as a student’s advocate in some circumstances. The DSS staff may include professionals who provide crisis intervention and brief supportive counseling. DSS can also help with identifying accessible housing and assistive technology.

Students and parents should meet with the DSS staff to discuss needs and arrange for services as early as possible—well before classes start. Schools have limited equipment and funding for free services for students with disabilities. If an institution is not required by law to provide a particular service, such as free tutoring, that service may be in short supply, if available at all. Making arrangements early will give the student the best choices.

If the student has not made arrangements for special accommodations in advance, he or she should meet with each instructor to request accommodations as soon as classes begin. It is the student’s responsibility to let instructors know about his/her learning styles and needs. Students should also become aware of a number of simple tips that other students have found useful (see Figure 2 on pg.9).

Some instructors will be unfamiliar with Section 504 and the ADA. They may resist making the necessary accommodations because they don’t understand the school’s obligations. If this happens, the student should ask DSS for assistance. DSS staff can help make the arrangements. They can also educate the instructors about their responsibilities under the law.

Figure 1: Examples of Auxiliary Aids That May Be Provided under Section 504

- taped texts
- telephone handset amplifiers
- note takers
- closed caption decoders
- open and closed captioning
- interpreters
- voice synthesizers
- readers
- specialized gym equipment
- videotext displays
- calculators or keyboards with large buttons
- television enlargers
- reaching device for library use
- talking calculators
- raised-line drawing kits
- electronic readers
- assistive listening devices
- Braille calculators, printers, or typewriters
- assistive listening systems
- telecommunications devices for deaf persons
**Changing Plans**

No matter how well a student has planned the transition to college, and no matter how much support he or she receives, it is not possible to guarantee that they will do well. Many students will succeed; some will shine. Others will fail or run the risk of failure. Failing or having problems in one class does not mean the student cannot succeed in another. However, failure in several classes is usually a sign that it’s time to reconsider the student’s plan.

The college’s DSS and the student’s adviser should be included in any discussions about taking fewer classes or leaving college. If a four-year university presented too many challenges, a two-year community college may be a better option for the student, especially if they are just beginning college.

**Financing a College Education**

Many students need financial assistance to pay for college. The federal government and most states offer scholarships, loans, grants, and other programs. The state office of vocational rehabilitation may also fund tuition, books and supplies, and services for eligible students. *(Additional information on services offered through these offices appears below in the section entitled “Entering the Workplace.” pg. 10)*

**Figure 2:**

**Useful Strategies, Accommodations, & Modifications for Students with Disabilities Strategies**

- Use memory aids such as organizational software, note-taking aids or services, hand-held pocket organizers, notepads, or tape recorders.
- Use index cards to group small bits of information, key concepts, or new vocabulary.
- Practice taking tests, writing term papers, and managing lab assignments.
- Schedule weekly appointments with the campus writing center for help in organizing papers and proofreading drafts.

**Accommodations or Modifications**

- Request the help of tutors to aid in understanding class material and to keep up with assignments (free tutoring may or may not be available).
- Ask for advance access to course syllabi, including a description of all class requirements.
- Arrange to take more frequent tests that cover smaller amounts of material than the rest of the class. Or take lengthy exams in intervals with short breaks.
- Ask for extra time to prepare for oral presentations, take exams, or complete papers.
- Request frequent feedback from the instructor regarding performance expectations, information to be tested, and course learning objectives.

*Adapted from The Student with a TBI: Achieving Goals for Higher Education, Ruoff, J. 2001.*
Families and students should also ask the school about tuition waiver and discount programs. Certain professions with workforce shortages, such as nursing, offer incentives for students to consider entering the profession.

Exploring sources of financial aid takes time. A high school guidance counselor, the transition specialist, or the college financial aid office can help point the student and family in the right direction. Public librarians can often suggest good places to look, both in print and online.

**Continuing Education Resources**

College Opportunities On-Line (COOL) provides links to nearly 7,000 universities, liberal arts colleges, specialized colleges, community colleges, career or technical colleges, and trade schools. COOL is a service of the U.S. Department of Education.

Go to: [www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool](http://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool)

Information about federal student aid programs at the U.S. Department of Education, including grants, loans, and programs such as Federal Work Study, may be found at the website below. Schools are not required to participate in any of these federal financial aid programs. Be sure to check with each school. [www.studentaid.ed.gov/](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a form that all applicants for federal financial aid must complete, is at: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

The Federal Student Aid website offers information about federal, state, and private sources of financial aid. It also offers information about preparing for and selecting colleges.

Go to: [www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp)

The U.S. Department of Education suggests a list of questions to consider in evaluating trade or technical schools.

Go to: [http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/index.html)

Information about Section 529 College Savings Plans is available from the state department of education or a financial adviser.

Information about the auxiliary aids and services that colleges and universities have under Section 504 and the ADA can be found at: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html)


**Entering the Workplace**

Some young people with TBI are able to work full-time or part-time in a regular job. Others will require special training and support from a job coach. Some will do better in jobs that involve a great deal of repetition. Still others will want to open a business or work from home.
A variety of employment options and support services are available to help persons with TBI and other disabilities prepare for and succeed in a job.

**The State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**

The state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency has a key role in helping students find jobs and job training. The VR agency can identify work options and guide the young person in making choices based on his or her interests, abilities, and needs.

Students with TBI who are receiving special education services or whose injury is likely to be a barrier to employment should register with their state VR agency two years before high school graduation or before they turn 21, whichever is earlier. This allows the VR counselor to participate in transition planning meetings and advise the student about vocational assessment, job training, and other services. Because funding is limited, many states have established priority categories and waiting lists for VR services. Registration may help the eligible student gain access to needed VR services and funding instead of joining the waiting list.

A student who sustains a TBI during the last year or two of high school may not be receiving special education services. If that student has a physical or learning disability that may be a barrier to employment, he or she should register with the VR office as early as possible.

**State Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

VR agencies offer the following services:

- vocational assessment to help identify skills, abilities, interests, and job goals;
- vocational counseling and guidance;
- physical and mental restoration services related to an employment goal;
- training and education to learn new vocational skills;
- rehabilitation technology, telecommunication aids, and other adaptive devices;
- job placement services;
- services to help students with disabilities get a job after finishing high school;
- supported employment; and
- referral to other services.

**Eligibility for VR Services**

To receive VR services, the student must:

- have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial barrier to employment;
- be able to benefit, in terms of an employment outcome, from VR services; and
- require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) are presumed to be eligible for VR services.

**Related Employment Services**

**One-Stop Career Centers**

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Division of Employment and Training has One-Stop Career Centers in every state. Services of these centers are available for anyone who wants to work.
The centers offer the following services:

- access to computers for posting resumes and job searching;
- review of job qualifications, experience, readiness, and abilities;
- vocational counseling;
- referral to employers with appropriate job openings, to other agencies for job training, and for supportive services (e.g. health, housing, legal);
- classes in searching for job openings, writing résumés and cover letters, interviewing for a job, networking, and using computers to post résumés and search for jobs; and
- fax, copier, and phones for use during a job search.

**Ticket to Work**
People over age 18 who receive Social Security assistance may be eligible for a program known as Ticket to Work. The goal of this program is to increase opportunities and choices for Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment, VR, and other support services. This program removes many of the barriers that made it difficult for people to go to work because their earned income would mean a loss of Medicaid benefits. The Social Security Administration automatically sends eligible students a “ticket” for this program. The ticket is valid at VR agencies, as well as at other service providers.

**Local Services**
Some community employment agencies specialize in working with people with cognitive impairment. They may offer specialized supports to individuals with TBI.

**Vocational Resources**
**Vocational Rehabilitation** - To locate the state vocational rehabilitation office near you, go to: [https://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902](https://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902)

**One-Stop Career Centers** - Each state has several career centers that offer services to people looking for work. Go to: [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

**Ticket to Work** - Go to the Social Security Administration at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or to the program website at [www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com).

**Other Federal and State Benefits for Young Working Adults**
The student’s existing sources of income or service eligibility may be affected by earned income. Two major sources of support are usually involved: Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, and Medicaid health benefits.

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**
Once a young person begins to work, SSI may be reduced or eliminated, depending on the student’s earnings. The rules for these decisions are complex. It is helpful to consult with the VR agency or Social Security office to discuss the student’s specific situation.

**Medicaid**
States may provide benefits to workers with disabilities who, because of their earnings, no longer qualify for Medicaid. Many states have implemented laws that allow people to purchase Medicaid on the basis of an income-based, sliding scale. This allows people to go to work with less concern about the potential of losing medical benefits.
Income and Medical Benefits Resources

Social Security - Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and SSI are federal programs that provide financial assistance to people with disabilities. Individuals who have a disability and meet the medical criteria may qualify for benefits under either program. For more information, go to: www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.

Medicaid - For general information about Medicaid, go to: www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/consumer.asp

For information about the Medicaid Buy-In Program, which allows people with disabilities who are working to purchase Medicaid benefits, go to: www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/buyin.htm.

Medicare - People with disabilities who have been receiving SSDI for 24 months may be eligible for Medicare. For more information, go to: www.medicare.gov.

Finding a Place to Live

Leaving high school often makes young people want to feel more independent. For some, a way to enjoy greater independence is to move away from home. There are some different options depending upon whether the student continues his or her education or decides to work.

At least six months before graduation or at the end of high school, the student who wishes to work should begin meeting with representatives of an independent living center or state and local resources for assistance in determining the options that fit his or her goals and needs.

Students continuing their education may choose to live on-campus, in off-campus housing, or at home. On-campus housing can be more convenient. Section 504 and the ADA require educational institutions offering on-campus housing to accommodate students with disabilities. At some colleges, housing is made accessible on request. Advance planning will allow time for any renovations that need to be made. Most colleges have a student housing office. Staff of this office can answer questions about on-site and off-site housing.

Regardless of whether a student chooses to work, to continue his or her education, or to combine work and continuing education, some students choose to live with their families, and family members provide all the assistance they need. Some students may need outside assistance, such as a personal care assistant, whether living alone, with family, or with a roommate or group of peers.

Many resources are available that can help students with identifying and paying for housing, supports, and assistance. For example, VR staff can provide guidance to students. In addition, every state offers several independent living centers. Staff of these centers offer peer counseling, skills training, advocacy, and information and referral. Some centers offer housing referrals, communication assistance, support groups, transportation, and health information.

Some states offer home care assistance programs. These programs provide services such as meal preparation, grocery shopping, laundry, and light housekeeping to adults with disabilities. A student who qualifies for Medicaid may be able to take advantage of the Medicaid Home and Community Services Waiver program if it is available in his or her state. This program offers home health care, personal care, rehabilitation, and other services.
A number of states have established TBI trust funds. These funds provide assistance to persons with TBI who do not have other funding sources for needed services. Eligibility and the types of services offered may vary, not every state has a trust fund. The state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America will know whether a trust fund exists and can provide contact information.

Other things to think about when choosing a place to live include: transportation, social and recreational activities, shopping and financial management, health and safety, and behavioral support. For many people, any change or transition can create a multitude of challenges. If change is particularly difficult for the student, it’s best to make changes gradually and with advance preparation and practice.

**Independent Living Resources**

**Medicaid Home and Community Services** - Information about Home and Community Services for people eligible for Medicaid and SSI can be found at: [www.aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/primer.htm](http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/primer.htm)

**Independent Living Centers** - Every state has Centers for Independent Living (CILs) that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of the communities in which they live. Core CIL services include: advocacy, independent living skills training, information and referral and peer counseling.

Many CILs also help people find housing and personal care assistance. The Independent Living Resource Utilization program is a national center for information, training, research, and technical assistance in independent living. A list of independent living centers, updated weekly, is included on its website. To find a CIL in your area, go to: [http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html](http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html)

**Finding a Day Activity**

Some students with TBI may choose to participate in a day activity, rather than further schooling or entering the workforce. Different from brain injury rehabilitation programs, day activity programs typically focus on habilitation rather than rehabilitation. Habilitation services are designed to develop, maintain and/or maximize the individual’s independent functioning in self care, physical and emotional growth, socialization, communication, and vocational skills.

**Day Programming Through the Division of Developmental Disabilities**

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) serves New Jersey residents who have a disability that manifested before age 22, and have lifelong limitations in certain areas of living. Some people with brain injury meet the criteria for services under the Division of Developmental Disabilities, and may be eligible to attend a day program funded through this agency. Day programming offered through DDD is typically attended by individuals with different types and severity of disability.

As with other programs it is good to contact and visit several to find the most appropriate program for your family member. If you are registered with DDD, contact your DDD case manager to learn more about day programming. Ask your DDD case manager if there is a brain injury specific day program in your area that your family member could attend, or contact a brain injury day program in your area to see if they accept DDD funding.
Keep in mind that there may be a waiting list for day programming services through DDD. To learn more about whether or not your family is eligible for services through DDD contact the Division at 1-800-832-9173 or visit their website at: http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/about/

**Brain Injury Clubhouse Programs**

A newer type of program that is emerging in New Jersey and around the country is the brain injury clubhouse model. The clubhouse model, in contrast to traditional day programs, refers to attendees as “members” rather than “patients” or “clients”, and focuses on strengths and abilities, rather than disabilities.

Members are involved in all aspects of running the program in order to gain self-worth, purpose and confidence. Typical clubhouses are easily accessible and located within the community; provide community supports including help with benefits, transportation, housing, advocacy, medical and finances; provide opportunities for member education both in house and external; and have social programs.

Members and staff work together to determine activities, and members set their own goals, with staff assistance as needed. For those individuals who no longer need or would not benefit from a traditional brain injury day program, a clubhouse model may be an option for helping that individual work towards community re-entry.

**Adult Day Health Services in Your Community**

For those individuals no longer in need of rehabilitative day programming in a brain injury specific program, adult day health services in the community may be an option. Adult day health services may be necessary when supervision is needed during the day while other family members return to work. New Jersey’s Department of Health & Senior Services defines adult day health services as “a facility or a distinct part of a facility which is licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services to provide preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative services under medical and nursing supervision to meet the needs of functionally impaired adult participants.”

To search for adult day health services in your area visit the Department of Health & Seniors Services website at: http://web.doh.state.nj.us/apps2/healthfacilities/fsSetSearch.aspx?by=county. Keep in mind that these facilities are often attended by older adults, but some may serve more adults with disabilities than others. It is always good to call and visit several in your area to find the right one for your family member.

**4. MAKE A PLAN**

This section provides background information that will help in planning the transition from high school.

Planning is the third part of the transition process. Because it is a collaborative process, planning takes time. It also often involves compromise. Parents or other supportive people have the student’s best interests at heart. They also have a great deal of expertise. The most important factor, however, is that the plan represent the student’s ideas and goals. This sometimes means that others may not agree entirely with the plan. They may think the student should do something different. It’s important to have wide-ranging discussions of options. But once a plan is firmed up, it is important that everyone support it.
The Family’s Ongoing Role

As a student nears adulthood, greater independence is often a goal. The need for family involvement may decrease, but it does not end. Family-centered planning is a way to consider the needs of each member of the family when making decisions. The student should have a major role in planning and decision making. However, both the student and family should work together to build support systems (sometimes referred to as “support circles”) to ensure the student will have an active family and community life. Support circles foster friendships and networks that enhance a person’s life and options.

Assessing the Student’s Abilities

The IEP and transition plan are based on a thorough, accurate, and age appropriate transition assessment of the student’s abilities. The IDEA requires that a qualified professional do the testing. The school system pays for the test and provides the personnel (often, a school psychologist), as well as all the materials and equipment necessary to administer the test.

In addition, assessments and other evaluation materials used under IDEA must:

- not discriminate on a racial or cultural basis
- be provided in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the student knows and can do and
- be used for purposes for which the measures are valid and reliable

More than one type of assessment is needed to provide enough information to make good transition decisions. It is important that the student be assessed in all areas of potential disability. The assessment tools and strategies should be chosen to provide information that directly assists in determining that the educational needs of the student are met.

Neuropsychological Assessment

A neuropsychological evaluation is recommended for students with TBI at the time they begin transition planning. This exam should be administered by a neuropsychologist, who is a psychologist with special training in evaluation and treatment of brain functions.

The purpose of the neuropsychological evaluation is to identify strengths and weaknesses in a person’s thinking skills. It involves tests that provide a baseline measure of a person’s abilities. The test also suggests ways to improve strengths while working around areas of weakness. The school system may need to be convinced to include this as one of the kinds of assessments it provides under IDEA.

Before the test, the parent should be sure that the neuropsychologist knows why the testing is being done. If the student has had previous evaluations, the neuropsychologist should have a copy of the test results. This will enable the neuropsychologist to compare results of the tests. The parent should ask the neuropsychologist to include in the report comments about the types of services or supports that may help the student to have the best chance of success.

Environmental Assessments

In addition to assessing the student’s abilities, it is a good idea to assess the environment. Housing, workplace, and school environments, as well as support facilities in the community must be evaluated. For example, for a student who relies on public transportation, living or working near a bus line or subway can make the difference between success and frustration.
Setting Goals
Once a student’s assessment has been done, it is time to set goals for the transition plan. Like planning, goal setting is collaborative. It should include the student, family members, teacher, and other professionals, such as an employment specialist (job coach), vocational rehabilitation counselor, advocate, neuropsychologist, nurse, occupational therapist, physiatrist, physical therapist, social worker, and speech-language therapist.

“The team should explore all possible options before setting goals.
Transition goals should be measurable and attainable.”

Consider setting goals that address:
• where and with whom the student will live
• what the student will be doing (e.g., working part- or full-time, taking classes, volunteering, going to college)
• financial resources the student will need and how the student will get them

“The goals should be consistent with the student’s strengths.
They should be challenging, but not overwhelming.”

The goals should be written down. Each goal should have an action plan that lists the steps necessary to reach the goal and a time-line or deadline. The goal should also foresee any obstacles that need to be overcome and strategies for overcoming them, and each goal should spell out the skills or information needed to reach the goal. Each goal should also designate the person or persons who are responsible for helping the student accomplish each activity, and state how progress will be measured. Finally, it should state how progress will be measured.

Keeping Track of Progress
Many students have trouble following through with plans, even plans they themselves have made. But when goals are written with specific deadlines and an action plan, it is easier to track—and celebrate!--progress. Lack of progress means that it may be time to find other resources to help achieve the goal. In some cases, the best option is to change the goal.

The student should set a time each week to look at the goals, activities, and time lines. Ask the student to determine which tasks are on track and which are slipping. To add structure to this review, the student might ask a school adviser, advocate, or staff from DSS to meet with him or her regularly to do the review.

Troubleshooting Strategies
Even with the best planning, many people find that the goals they set are not attainable. Students with TBI are no exception. For example, a student may wish to graduate from college. But once enrolled, the student may find the demands of higher education are overwhelming.

Breaking a goal into parts can help the student to feel successful and move toward a larger goal. For example, a small goal may simply be to pass a test. On the basis of these smaller goals, the student can consider whether the overall goal is realistic. The student should feel free to turn to relatives, his or her advocate, or other people for support when needed.
**Reviewing and Revising the Plan**

If, despite the student’s efforts, something isn’t working, the review session is an ideal time to find out what is needed. For example, a goal may have been unrealistic. Or the person assigned to an action step may have met an unexpected obstacle. Extra help, adjustments to the deadline, or just a reminder may help the student get back on track. Flexibility is essential.

The transition plan goals must be reviewed at least once a year. Depending on the type of goals, the services being provided, and the length of time until the transition from high school, it may be helpful to review it more frequently.

Students, parents, and others should consider the time used in setting goals, writing them down, measuring and reviewing progress as an investment. The payoff can be tremendous.

**5. FIND AN ADVOCATE**

After a student leaves high school, he or she takes on increasing responsibility for securing any needed assistance—whether from a landlord, professor, employer, or agency with which the student is affiliated.

When beginning this move to greater self-reliance, many students find it helpful to have a guide or an advocate. A parent or other family member may have filled this role for many years. As a young person nears adulthood, a new advocate may be more helpful. The student should also learn self-advocacy skills as the transition to adult life proceeds.

(See Learning to Advocate for Myself & Success After Brain Injury in the Personal Stories section - pg. 19 and 20)

**Skills of an effective advocate include an ability to:**

- find information
- communicate effectively
- solve problems
- make decisions
- negotiate
- stand up for the young person’s rights

An advocate can make contacts and represent the student in dealing with agencies and can help the student make phone calls and participate in meetings.

The advocate can also help the student set up and get to appointments, and can make sure the student has enough information to make sound decisions. A good advocate is very familiar with the student’s situation, needs, and goals.

Finding an effective advocate can be challenging. Persistence is often the key to finding a good match. School transition specialists may be able to supply the names of potential advocates.

Rather than having just one advocate, a student may develop relationships with several people who will advocate for different services. Some advocates have limited time to share with the student, so it may be helpful to focus on specific problems.

Although they do not take on formal advocacy roles, friends and people involved in working with people with disabilities can also advise a student who is in the transition process.
A counselor or staff person from one of the agencies that serves the student is a particularly good possibility for this role.

Transition from high school to college or the workplace is not just a phase. Some people with disabilities will need extended or life-long assistance. The sooner they learn good self-advocacy skills, the more likely they will be able to achieve greater independence. But no matter how independent the student becomes, a trusted advocate can always help with new issues that arise and provide trusted advice on ongoing issues.

**Personal Stories**

**Learning to Advocate for Myself**

*by Meghan Kyle*

A little over five years ago I sustained a severe traumatic brain injury at the age of 16. I am now 21 and heading into my last year and a half of college. There are certain things that I have learned, in my 5 year journey, which I feel are worth sharing. Since my injury I have been learning and relearning skills that range from simple tasks such as walking and talking to memorizing information for classes and performing math on a college level. I was only in high school at the time of my accident and at the age of 16, I was forced to mature and realize that what everyone was saying was true. Doctors were telling me there was only a chance I would graduate on time and go to college with my class; I was going to have to work extremely hard to get back to the level I wanted.

First with my return to school entering into my junior year, I realized I would have to let people know what is going on because they couldn’t see how the work load and intense demands affected me. My high school teachers couldn’t tell when I was absolutely exhausted (no matter how much I yawned), for some I was just another bored high school student. At the end of every long day in high school I was drained, I had no more energy to control my emotions or what I said. It took me a significant number of fights with my parents to eventually learn, I had to tell people there was a point in the day I couldn’t take anymore stimulation and needed to relax to “shut my brain off”. That was just the beginning of learning to advocate for myself.

During my planning for college I went in knowing I would have to tell people what is going on with me, emotionally and psychologically. I also knew some of the accommodations that worked for me but weren’t going to be enough to get me through my next level of education. On applying to colleges I tried to visit all the disability offices to get a better feel of what kind of services I could be provided at each school. I finally made my choice, but then getting there, starting classes, and setting up my accommodations all fell back on me.

I was used to my parents helping me with everything and working with my teachers. For the first time in my life I had to go to talk to all the departments and professors to make sure I could get the accommodations I needed, and this process woke me and forced me to recognize my own deficits. Trying out all the different accommodations that I was approved to have, finding what worked best for me and which would allow me to succeed.

My first semester freshman year before I even started classes I went and talked to the Disability Support Services office. I gave them all my documentation from my neuropsychological exam and together we reviewed all the accommodations that I was approved for. Next, I told my contact at the office which accommodations I wanted to start trying to use and which ones I knew were going to be necessary for me since I learned some of them in high school. Throughout my freshman year I tried all of the documented accommodations that I could use, some worked, some didn’t. I did feel better knowing
that I had given them all a try. I still am approved to use all the accommodations that were recommended to me on my neuropsychological report, but I only use the ones I know work for me and the others are there in case I need them.

I have been using the same accommodations and services since freshman year. I now am just coming back from a semester abroad. Try advocating for yourself and making sure you get the services you need in a foreign language and country. I am going into my senior year of college, but I will still graduate late because of one of the first things I learned as a freshman, which is that it is very difficult for me to do the “normal” five courses a semester. I instead take four and use everything I can to make sure I do my best.

It took me a while to become okay with the fact I couldn’t be like other kids in my year, but I did learn one very important fact. I’m never going to be like “everyone else”. I’m special and unique and that’s what makes me who I am, nothing can take that away from me, I will do it all on MY schedule!

SUCCESS after a Brain Injury
By Matt Peltz - Matt is a Cognitive Therapy Aid for Children’s Specialized Hospital and young adult living with brain injury.

One of the foremost reasons behind the success I have been able to achieve after my brain injury has been a mantra instilled in me by the pediatric rehabilitation hospital that I once attended, the same hospital which I am currently employed by; that mantra being: “Become a Champion of Your Brain Injury”.

After returning for my senior year of high school, I was classified and given an Individualized Education Program (IEP). I had to quickly acknowledge I would not have a typical senior year. I not only had to work studiously in order to gain an adequate understanding of my school curriculum, but I also continued to delve over and research information concerning my brain injury. Because I used the strategies I learned from my rehabilitation I was able to return to playing for the my high school basketball and volleyball teams, take the SAT’s, and gain acceptance into college.

After getting into college and giving myself the justified celebration time, I began to plan for all that I’d have to do so that I experience a similar level of success at the college level. In college I continued my hard work while completing a degree in Political Science and Psychology, becoming a College Office of Disabilities Peer Mentor, and of course attending every football game. Using my legally afforded accommodations and my helpful support system which included; my family, my primary therapist at the Office of Disabilities, my psychologist, my friends, and my fraternity, I graduated from college in 2009.

Since graduating college, and taking some time to decide which route I plan to pursue, I have decided to work towards becoming a neuropsychologist in hopes of one day, possibly, returning to work as a clinician at the pediatric rehabilitation hospital that I once attended. Currently I work for that rehabilitation hospital as a Cognitive Therapy Aid. This position gives me an opportunity to contribute many different things. Having personally carried out the post-brain injury rehabilitation, I provide the therapists with a co-worker who could offer them input from someone having been in a position that is very similar to many of the patients. Also, after sharing my story I have been told that I provide the patients with both hope and proof of the possibility of a successful future.

In order to pursue my dream of working in a post acute, outpatient, neuro-rehabilitation facility, while working as a Therapy Aide, I have applied to and was accepted into a Master’s of Social Work graduate degree program. While completing my Master’s degree studies I will
be sure to continue to employ the cognitive strategies which I have used in order to excel since sustaining my brain injury. I have seen first hand, no matter the obstacle, if you put forth the effort, there is no limit to the success a person is capable of achieving.

**Advocacy Resources**


**6. OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

**Guardianship**

In New Jersey, 18 years is the age of emancipation when each person is considered to be capable of and responsible for legal self-determination. Self-determination includes making decisions about finances, marriage, medical treatment, education, contracts, voting, and other facets of citizenship and adulthood. Prior to age 18, parents and other appointed guardians of the child acted for the child. However, a protective arrangement of surrogate decision-making may be considered to protect a vulnerable person with a brain injury when the injuries cause substantial cognitive limitations in his/her decision-making abilities.

**Surrogate Decision Making: Non-judicial**

There are non-judicial and judicial alternatives for surrogate decision making. Non-judicial procedures are usually negotiated by an attorney and do not go to court. Judicial alternatives involve attorney representation and are decided in a court of law.

Non-judicial procedures are less restrictive and are a voluntary act of appointing a trusted person to make decisions for the person when that person is unable to make decisions for himself/herself, for a short period of time or for an extended period of time. Non-judicial procedures may be revoked at any time. The common non-judicial surrogate decision making procedures are Power of Attorney, Medical Power of Attorney, and Advance Directives. Consider consulting an attorney to determine if the non-judicial surrogate decision-making procedures are best for your situation.

**Surrogate Decision Making: Judicial procedures**

Guardianship is a legal procedure decided in a court of law that grants one person the right to make decisions on behalf of another person. The appointed person is called the “guardian” and the person deemed incapacitated to make decisions is known as the “ward.” The term incapacitated means to become disabled or otherwise ineligible to assert one’s rights, through injury or illness. Guardianship is taking away the ward’s right of legal self-determination. The person must be adjudicated to be an incapacitated person. There are two forms of guardianship: limited and general.

**Limited Guardianship**

Limited guardianship identifies the areas of decision making that are given by the court to the guardian. Those areas not specified by the court remain with the ward. For example, the guardian may be given decision making responsibility for legal, financial, and medical matters. The ward would retain all other areas of decision making.

**General (plenary) Guardianship**

General guardianship indicates that the guardian makes decisions for he ward who has been determined to be incapable of making or expressing decisions. General guardianship is the more restrictive procedure. Although responsible for making decisions for the ward, the guardian must take into consideration the ward’s wants, needs, preferences. The ward does not loose the right to challenge the guardian in a court of law.
Conservatorship
Conservatorship is a judicial procedure where a capable person can consent to have another person manage his/her financial affairs.

Guardian of the Person and Guardian of the Estate
In both limited and general guardianships, there are two general areas of consideration: of the person and of the estate. Of the Person relates to matters of a more social nature: medical, legal, residence, schooling, social security payee, and others. Of the Estate refers to money matters like inheritances, trusts, monetary awards, or other substantial income.

Restoration to capacity
The ward has the right to challenge the guardianship at any time in a court of law and ask to have his/her status changed from an incapacitated person back to a capacitated person.

Beginning the process
Parents and other caregivers may seek guardianship of the alleged incapacitated person by seeking the services of an attorney (those with most experience specialize in Elder Care and Disabilities), by filing Pro Se (“do-it-yourself”) documents, or through the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Bureau of Guardianship Services (BGS) for those registered with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Pro Se documents are available online at www.judiciary.state.nj.us/prose/10558.pdf. The DDD case manager can assist with information about pursuing guardianship through (BGS). BGS handles only guardian of the person, not guardian of the estate.

Information for the attorney
An attorney will require at least the following information in order of process a legal guardianship:
1. A child’s social security number.
2. An inventory of real property in the child’s name.
3. The amount of money in any and all bank accounts along with the specifics regarding the locations of the bank accounts.
4. The history of the child with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, if any (date of eligibility for DDD services, address and phone number of the case manager).
5. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and the specifics regarding the benefits.
6. Identification of the trustee for the child if a trust exists.

Filing for Guardianship
When the information gathering is complete, the attorney (or Pro Se) files a Complaint for Guardianship to the court along with the appropriate Affidavits or Certifications. Physicians and NJ Licensed Psychologists prepare reports upon which the Affidavits and Certifications are drawn. Assessments of competency are to be completed by a doctoral level licensed psychologist. (NOTE: Reports of School Psychologists are of an educational nature and do not usually address the matters relevant to guardianship.)

The attorney (private or through BGS) notifies all individuals who have the right to know about the guardianship proceedings. The potential guardian (You) will be expected to testify in court about the appropriateness of your application for a Judgment of Guardianship. By law, the Court is obligated to appoint an independent attorney to review the circumstances of the guardianship procedure and to interview the alleged incapacitated person. The applicant is responsible for the fee that that attorney shall charge. The alleged incapacitated person is expected to appear in court unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Schools and Guardianship
At the age of 18, rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), for students receiving special education services, pass to the adult student; unless the parent has
achieved guardianship or power of attorney for that purpose, or the student agrees to be the Petitioner in litigation asking for educational relief past the 18th birthday (classified students are eligible for a free, appropriate public education through the receipt of a diploma, or June of the year of their 21st birthday, whichever comes first.) An 18 year old can invite his/her parents to an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting, but who is the decision-maker?

“The 18 year old is the decision-maker, unless by operation of law, not age or disability, the rights are waived in favor of the parents.”

Further Information
The website of Guardianship Association of NJ, Inc (GANJI), www.ganji.org, offers substantive information about guardianship matters and resources. GANJI will respond to specific inquiries by e-mail or phone.

Transportation
Public transportation in New Jersey for people with disabilities is a challenge; for people with brain injury, it can be a greater challenge. A person with cognitive disabilities, who does not have apparent physical disabilities, may encounter barriers in obtaining transportation due to a lack of understanding of brain injury. It is important to remember that when you contact any of the available transportation resources, they may not be aware of, or knowledgeable about, brain injury. It is important to be prepared to provide more detailed information about your disability.

Transportation Resources

New Jersey Transit
1-800-772-2222
www.njtransit.com

Accessible Bus/Rail Information
For those with mobility devices, you can reserve a lift-equipped bus by calling the New Jersey Transit Information Center one day in advance of your trip, by 4pm.

Reduced Fare Program
(973) 378-6401 or (973) 378-6327
The New Jersey Transit reduced fare program is available to senior citizens and people with disabilities who travel the 150 regular bus routes, and 11 rail lines.

Access Link
1-800-955-2321
Access Link is a curb-to-curb service provided by New Jersey Transit for people with disabilities. The origin and destination of your trip must be within three-quarters of a mile on either side of a local bus route. Access Link operates during the same days and hours as the local bus routes and may be a good resource if:

• You need assistance getting on or off of a bus, or if you cannot ride on an accessible bus without assistance
• You cannot get to or from a bus stop or subway station

You could use an accessible vehicle, but accessible service is not available. Fares for Access Link are the same as the fares for the local bus route, and exact fare is required. There are no reduced fares for Access Link. Part of the application process for Access Link includes an interview by Access Link staff.
County Paratransit
Each of the 21 counties in New Jersey has a curb-to-curb transportation service for senior citizens and people with disabilities. The counties have the authority to manage their programs independently. The names and guidelines of the programs also vary from county to county. Please contact the paratransit program in your county for assistance or more detailed information.

Medical Transportation
Medicaid and/or private insurance, depending on your situation, may provide medical transportation. For further information, contact your insurance provider.

Social Supports
Transition from school to adult life can also mean transitioning from friends and peers in high school to an unknown social support system. Friends and peers may move on to college and/or to work, leaving the student with a brain injury only few friends with which to socialize. This can compound an already limited social support system at the high school level. It is important to develop and maintain social supports in order to avoid social isolation.

Social supports may include staying in contact with friends from high school through phone calls, visits, and social networking sites, but may also include making new friendships. As many non-disabled adults develop and maintain social supports through mutual interests, help the student with the brain injury identify personal areas of interest. Is there a club, class or volunteer opportunity that would allow the student to learn about and become more involved in that area while meeting others who share that interest. This shared interest also makes it easier to initiate conversations with others.

Another key to developing and maintaining social supports is to become involved in the community, which can include joining a club at the college the student is attending, attending the brain injury support group in the county, becoming involved with the independent living center for people with disabilities in the area, or volunteering for a local charitable organization. Additional social supports can be developed through local church or synagogue groups, a mentor peer to peer program, and social networking groups for people with brain injury.

It is important to remember that social opportunities do not need to be limited to only those with others who have a disability; interest groups can make great connections as well.

Volunteer Opportunities
Volunteering can be an excellent transition from high school into employment, providing a student with a relatively risk-free means of sampling a work field without making a long-term commitment to it. Volunteering can also bring the emotional benefits of contributing to the community, letting a student feel that they’re involved in a project and that they belong. Volunteer work can also enhance social support networks, which is a key aspect of the transition process and of health and well-being in general.

The prospect of volunteering should be discussed with the student and related school professionals who are involved in the transition planning process, like a social worker, or a job coach. The student may wish to take on a volunteer responsibility while still in high school, as a means of sampling different work fields and settings. A student may desire to volunteer after graduating, instead of seeking employment or attending college, to gradually progress to a more independent lifestyle while still taking advantage of social supports and the structured nature of volunteering. All of these options can be discussed early in the transition planning process.
**Volunteer Resources**

**Volunteer New Jersey**
This is an online resource which can be used to search a professionally maintained directory of volunteer opportunities. Volunteer profiles can also be posted on this site. Volunteer New Jersey also has a directory of volunteer centers in every county of New Jersey, providing a means to contact these agencies for more information on local volunteer opportunities. You can access this website at: [http://www.volunteernewjersey.org/vnj/](http://www.volunteernewjersey.org/vnj/)

**Transitioning to adult health services**
Transitioning from child health services to adult health services can be difficult for an adolescent with brain injury, as it may not mean simply finding a primary care physician to replace the pediatrician, but rather finding medical professionals who understand brain injury and how it affects those injured in childhood or adolescence. It can also mean replacing a medical team that could include a pediatric neuropsychologist, pediatrician, physiatrist, and/or therapists.

Planning ahead by researching new professionals can ease the transition. Research can include speaking with other parents, seeking referrals from the current medical team, interviewing new professionals, and finding medical teams that accept specific insurance. Once a new medical team has been chosen, ask the current medical team to assist in the transition, not only through the transfer of medical records, but through speaking to the medical team.

**Medication Management**
As the teenager transitions from school to adult life, he/she should begin to become more familiar with their medication, including what the medication is for, when it needs to be taken, what the side effects and interactions are, and the process for obtaining refills on regular medications. It is important that an effective memory strategy is in place for consistency when taking medication as well as getting refills as needed. These reminders can include a reminder on their watch, cell phone, day planner, etc.

**Medical Insurance**
Another important piece of the transition to adult health services is identifying what type of medical insurance the now adult child will have. If the child is covered under a family health plan, ask your insurance company about a “Certification of Disability for the Handicapped Children Provision” form. This may allow the child to remain under the family health plan, if they meet the eligibility criteria that may include an ability to participate in “self-sustaining employment”.

In New Jersey, under the Dependent Under 31 (DU31) law, regardless of whether the child has a disability, the child can continue on their parents health plan until their 31st birthday. Eligibility requirements and coverage limits may apply. For more information, visit [http://www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_consumers/index.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_consumers/index.htm)

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI) & Medicaid**
After the child turns 18, they may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income which is a federal program established for the aged and people with disabilities. The program provides monthly payments to people who have a low income and few assets. The federal government administers SSI through the Social Security Administration office. People over 65 and people with disabilities, including children, may be eligible for SSI payments, and would receive New Jersey Medicaid automatically. Check with your local Social Security office for the SSI rates (as they vary state to state, and vary depending on a person’s living arrangements). For further information on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or visit their website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
The New Jersey Medicaid program, administered by the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, covers certain medical and health care services for individuals who meet established eligibility requirements. Medicaid is a medical assistance program designed for persons on limited fixed incomes and for some “medically needy” persons. SSI recipients are automatically eligible and need not make a separate application. For further information on Medicaid, call 1-800-356-1561.

**Additional Resources**


**7. GENERAL RESOURCES**

Many print and Internet resources provide information and assistance about education, employment, and independent living services. Although the Internet is a wonderful source of information, it must be used with caution. Many websites are not dependable or accurate. Government sites and those supported by national organizations are generally most trustworthy. When using a website, parents and students should never give personal information such as a Social Security number, date and place of birth, or sometimes, even a mailing address or phone number.

**General Information**

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is the premier source of information, education, support, and legislative advocacy for persons with brain injury, family members and caregivers, and the professionals and providers who serve them. Through BIAA’s network of state and local affiliates and support groups, connections to many of the services described in this booklet may be found. Go to: [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

Disability Info is a federal government website that includes disability-related information and links to hundreds of other organizations and websites. Go to: [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov)

**Education**

**Education Resource Centers**

Education Resource Centers offer free information on topics such as accessibility, career development, accommodations, financial aid, independent living, transition resources, training and postsecondary education, vocational education, and rehabilitation.

**National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities**

Go to: [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

**National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities** (HEATH Resource Center). Go to: [www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)

**National Center on Secondary Education and Transition**

Go to: [http://www.ncset.org/](http://www.ncset.org/)

**Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers**

Each state has at least one parent center that serves families of children and young adults
from birth to age 22. Center staff members often help families obtain the educational and other services for their children with disabilities. They provide training and information to parents, help resolve problems between families, schools, or other agencies, and connect children with disabilities to community resources.

Go to: http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/parentcenterlisting.html


**Funding**

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**8. ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Donald R. Hood**
Mr. Hood has worked as a teacher, trainer, instructor, and researcher for the past 25 years. His work since 1998 with the families of persons with brain injuries resulted in the publication of the “Family Advocacy Skills Training” (FAST) handbook and the community organizing manual, “Twelve Months to AAA Service: Community Collaboration to Make Services Available, Accessible, and Appropriate for Individuals with Brain Injury”.

**Bonnie Todis, Ph.D.**
In federally-funded research projects over the past 25 years, Dr. Todis has employed qualitative methodology to help identify strategies, practices, and policies to improve the education of students with disabilities, co-authored two social skills programs, published research findings in a number of refereed journals and has presented information about school accommodations for students with traumatic brain injury at national and regional conferences.

**Ann Glang, Ph.D.**
Since 1985, Dr. Glang has worked as a researcher, educator, and curriculum developer, and has directed or co-directed over 15 federally-funded research and demonstration projects in TBI. Dr. Glang has published a number of articles in refereed journals, edited two books on her work with children with TBI, and coauthored five manuals for educators serving children and youth with TBI.

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Website links were tested on March 6, 2012.

**9. NEW JERSEY RESOURCES**

There are many sources of information on brain injury, advocacy, special education, and many other topics addressed in this guide. The sources listed below are good places to begin searching when you need information about a specific topic.
The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey's Information & Resources Helpline (1-800-669-4323) can provide you with additional information on available resources.

**BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE OF NEW JERSEY, INC.**  
Phone: 1-800-669-4323 or (732) 745-0200  
Web: www.bianj.org  
The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey provides a number of services to assist individuals with a brain injury and their families.

**STATEWIDE PARENT ADVOCACY NETWORK (SPAN)**  
Phone: 1-800-654-7726  
Web: www.spannj.org  
SPAN provides information, training, and advocacy for parents of children with disabilities.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY**  
Phone: 1-800-922-7233  
Web: www.drnj.org  
Disability Rights New Jersey protects and advocates for the rights of citizens with disabilities.

**EDUCATION LAW CENTER**  
Phone: (973) 624-1815  
Web: www.edlawcenter.org  
The Education Law Center provides help for families with issues related to the education system.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH LAW PROJECT**  
Phone: (609) 392-5553  
Web: www.chlp.org  
Community Health Law Project advocates for the health care needs of individuals with disabilities.

**ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES FOR THE HANDICAPPED (ASAH) – NEW JERSEY**  
Phone: (877) 287-2724  
Web: www.asah.org  
ASAH provides information about private schools in NJ, which provide specialized services for students with special needs.

**FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER OF NEW JERSEY**  
Phone: 1-800-372-6510  
Web: www.fsconj.org  
The Family Support Center is a “One-Stop Shop” clearinghouse, offering the most up-to-date information on all types of disabilities as well as national, state and local support programs and services for individuals and families seeking such information.

**OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**  
Phone: (609) 292-0147  
Web: http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/  
This state office is responsible for providing special education and related services.

**LEARNING RESOURCE CENTERS**  
Web: http://www.nj.gov/education/lrc/  
The Learning Resource Centers are supported through the New Jersey State Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and provide services to parents and educators serving pupils with disabilities ages 3 to 21, including information services, books and videos that can be borrowed, and consultation and training services.

**DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES (DDS)**  
Phone: 1-888-285-3036 *Call for a FREE resource guide.
The Division of Disability Services is an excellent resource for disability-related information, and also oversees the Traumatic Brain Injury Fund and Traumatic Brain Injury Medicaid Waiver.

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DDD)
Phone: (609) 292-7260
Web: [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/index.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/index.html)

DDD provides services for households that include an individual with a developmental disability or brain injury sustained before the age of 21.

DIVISION OF CHILD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (DCBHS)
24-hour Access Line: 1-877-652-7624
Web: [www.state.nj.us/dcf/behavioral/](http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/behavioral/)

DCBHS serves children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral health care challenges and their families across all child-serving systems.

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (DVRS)
Phone: (609) 292-2919
Web: [http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/DVRIndex.html](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/DVRIndex.html)

DVRS provides services to individuals with work-related disabilities to help those individuals become employed.

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED (CBVI)
Phone: (973) 648-2324
Web: [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/index.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/index.html)

CBVI provides vocational rehabilitation services for people who are blind or visually impaired.

NEW JERSEY TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) FUND
Phone: 1-888-285-3036
Web: [http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/oias/tbis/tbifund.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/oias/tbis/tbifund.html)

The Traumatic Brain Injury Fund, administered by the Division of Disability Services, allows New Jersey residents who have survived a traumatic brain injury to obtain the services and supports they need to live in the community.

SPECIAL CHILD, ADULT AND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES
Phone: (609) 777-7778
Web: [www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/scdesc.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/scdesc.htm)

Special Child Health Services provides case management to ensure that children with special health care needs receive quality services that will prevent or reduce the effects of developmental delay, chronic illness or behavioral disorder.

CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS IN CHILDREN RELIEF FUND
Phone: 1-800-335-FUND
Web: [www.njcatastrophicfund.org](http://www.njcatastrophicfund.org)

Financial help is available from this fund if your child is 21 years old or younger when the medical expenses were incurred; your family has lived in New Jersey at least three months prior to application; and in any prior, consecutive, 12 month period, dating back to 1988, eligible expenses must exceed 10% of the family’s income, plus 15% of any excess income over $100,000. Covered expenses include, but are not limited to, special ambulatory care, acute or specialized in- or out-patient hospital care, medical equipment, medically-related home modifications, home health care and medical transportation.

NJ FAMILY CARE
Phone: 1-800-701-0710
Web: [www.njfamilycare.org](http://www.njfamilycare.org)

NJ FamilyCare is a federal and state funded health insurance program created to help New Jersey’s uninsured children and certain low-income parents and guardians to have affordable health coverage.