

Oklahoma Parents Center

Fall 2010



Mission Statement

Oklahoma Parents Center is dedicated to the inclusion and **equality of children** and adults with disabilities. Our mission is to train, inform, educate, and **support parents**, families, professionals and consumers in **building partnerships** that **meet the needs** of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth through twenty-six.

Students with Disabilities Get Scholarship Program!

House Bill 3393 is a new law which will become effective on August 27, 2010. The bill would allow students with disabilities who have an individualized education program (IEP) to qualify for a scholarship to attend any public or private school that meets the accreditation requirements of the State Board of Education. The legislation has been named the **Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program Act** to honor the memory of the governor's daughter, who died of a rare neuromuscular disease as an infant.

The scholarship program would not require new spending, but would merely redirect existing state funds that are currently spent on the student. Nor is there a set dollar amount that would be given to each student; instead, the amount of the scholarship would be either the private school's tuition or the amount of state aid that would be given to the school district where the student is enrolled, whichever is less.

For more information, please contact the Oklahoma Parents Center at 877-553-4332 or info@oklahomaparentscenter.org for an informational handout.

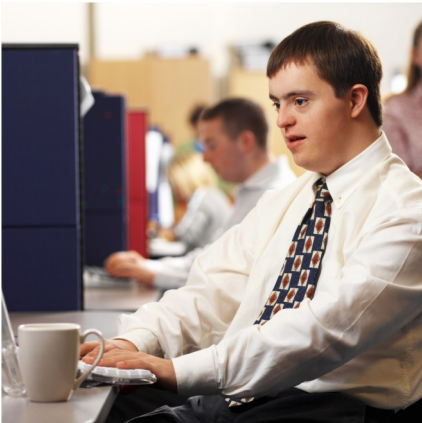
Transition to Adulthood

Adapted from www.nichcy.org

Life is full of transitions, and one of the more remarkable ones occurs when we get ready to leave high school and go out in the world as young adults. When the student has a disability, it's especially helpful to plan ahead for that transition. In fact, IDEA requires it.

A Quick Summary of Transition:

- Transition services are intended to prepare students to move from the world of school to the world of adulthood.
- Transition planning begins during high school at the latest.
- IDEA requires that transition planning start by the time the student reaches age 16.
- Transition planning may start earlier (when the student is younger than 16) if the IEP team decides it would be appropriate to do so.



Transition planning takes place as part of developing the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP):

- ♦ The IEP team (which includes the student and the parents) develops the transition plan.
- ♦ The student must be invited to any IEP meeting where postsecondary goals and transition services needed to reach those goals will be considered.
- ♦ In transition planning, the IEP team considers areas such as postsecondary education or vocational training, employment, independent living, and community participation.
- ♦ Transition services must be a coordinated set of activities oriented toward producing results..
- ♦ Transition services are based on the student's needs and must take into account his or her preferences and interests.

**You can contact the Oklahoma Parents Center
at 877-553-4332 for more information!!!**

NorthWest Oklahoma Special Education Institute

The **Oklahoma Parents Center**, in partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education is delighted to present our next regional Special Education Institute. The **Northwest Oklahoma Special Education Institute** is scheduled for **Thursday, September 16th, 2010** from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the **Canadian Valley Technology Center - El Reno Campus**, El Reno, Oklahoma. This institute will include information on education, transition services, and other valuable information and will highlight the resources available in our great state all at **no cost** to families and professionals who live and work with individuals with disabilities, birth through 26 years.

Please visit our website, www.OklahomaParentsCenter.org, for additional information to be announced in the coming weeks.

20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) July 26, 2010

As the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) comes and goes, please take a moment to remind everyone what a monumental change the ADA has made to the lives of individuals with disabilities:

- 1) **Prohibited discrimination** against people with disabilities in employment and public accommodations, including a range of privately-owned entities
- 2) Required employers to **make reasonable accommodations**
- 3) Required that telephone companies provide **non-voice device telecommunications options**
- 4) Required **closed captioning** for all television public service announcement produced by or funded in part by the federal government
- 5) Required that Federal and non-Federal government agencies' services and programs be **readily accessible** to and usable by individuals with disabilities

We celebrate this anniversary with great hopes that the next 20 years will bring even greater accomplishments for individuals with disabilities!

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10 Tips for a Successful School Year

by Pat Howey, Advocate
www.wrightsLaw.com

Here are ten tips to help you get off to a good start at the beginning of the new school year!!!

1.

Help Your Child Deal with Transitions

Is your child making the transition from preschool to kindergarten, from elementary to middle school, or from middle school to high school? Plan to take your child to visit the new school or classroom before the first day of school.

2.

Reread your child's IEP

Do you understand what the school agreed to provide? Do your child's teachers understand what they are to provide? Is your child's IEP SMART? (specific, measurable, action words, realistic, and time-specific.



3.

Meet with your child's teacher(s) to discuss your child's special needs

Take a picture of your child to the meeting. Teachers are more likely to take a personal interest in your child and remember your child's special needs if s/he has seen a picture of your child.

4.

Take extra copies of your child's IEP to the meeting with the teacher(s)

Never assume that teachers have had time to read your child's IEP before school begins. Teachers have many things to do as they prepare for the first day of school. The teacher may not understand how important the IEP is to your child's success. Leave a copy of your child's IEP with each teacher.

5.

Make a List of Important Things About Your Child

Make a list of the five most important things that the teacher(s) need to know about your child. Explain why these things are vital to your child's success. Leave a copy of the list with each teacher.

**You need to be watchful, even when things appear to be going well.
Have a great school year!**

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6.

Prepare to Deal with Potential Problems Early

If your child is in general education classes, prepare for the teacher(s) who wants to see how your child “gets along” before making any changes in the way they run their classrooms. Teachers often take this position because they want to give their students a fresh start. You may need to explain why your child may fail unless the teacher understands his/her unique needs and provides the necessary services, accommodations and supports.

7.

Resolve Old Concerns and Issues

If you have concerns or issues that were not resolved during the last IEP meeting, request another IEP meeting immediately. Try to resolve these issues and concerns before your child begins to have problems this year.

8.

Get a New Assessment

Consider getting your child's skills tested very early in the school year. Where are your child's skills on standardized educational achievement tests? Use these scores as baseline data. You can compare these scores with scores obtained at the end of the year to measure your child's progress. (See Chapter 8, Your Child's Evaluations, in *Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy*).

9.

Go to your school's Open House

In addition to giving you another chance to meet with your child's teachers (and make a good impression), teachers often explain their classroom rules during Open House. When you attend, you have a chance to see if your child may have trouble understanding the teachers' rules. You will also be in a better position to explain these rules to your child.

10.

Get a bound notebook

Use the notebook as a “contact log” to send messages to the teachers. Write a sentence or two to the teacher(s) every day. Do not make your child the bearer of messages about problems at school. Make an extra copy of your log often in case the notebook is lost.

Helping Children with Disabilities Love Their Bodies - Inside and Out!

Adapted from www.disaboom.com

Article by Kara Sheridan

Children with physical disabilities are born into an idealized world focused more than ever on appearance, beauty, and attraction. The media has recently fluttered with stories detailing the consequences of overemphasizing thinness and the elusive expectation of perfection. Eating disorders and self-injury are on the rise, and many of today's young people are experiencing a body-image crisis.

Children with physical disabilities face even more challenges with the almost total exclusion of images of people who look like them. These children and adolescents are left to conclude that they are either alone in their existence as visibly different or that their appearance should be hidden, covered, or fixed.

Surgeries and medical interventions intended to improve quality of life for children with disabilities can also inadvertently send a message that the child's body needs major reconstruction. Teens with disabilities that cause changes in their appearance during adolescence are at the greatest risk for developing poor self-esteem. Side effects from medication, amputation, and weight fluctuation are additional adversities in the pursuit of a confident sense of self. A positive body image and healthy self-esteem are powerful predictors of happiness and success, two ingredients all parents seek to provide for their children's futures.

Research in this area does provide one glimmering ray of hope for children with disabilities and their families: the influence of parents on the development of body image and self-esteem is even more powerful than the role of media and friends. Providing an accepting and supportive environment is important for all young people.

Parents' Attitudes Can Support Positive Body Image for Children with Disabilities

What else can parents of children and teens with disabilities do to help foster a positive body image?



- **Think of yourself as a teacher of body affirmation and acceptance**

Start by modeling this behavior in your statements and treatment of your own body.

- **Reward good hygiene and a healthy interest in appearance**

Offer sincere praise to your kids as they form a positive mental picture of their appearance.

- **Consider participation in adaptive sports**

as a way your child's body can be a vehicle for success, competition, and fun!

- **Find images of role models with disabilities**

that represent a variety of personal styles. Rent movies, read books, even print pictures for your child to know he/she is not alone. For teens with disabilities, see if there are any athletes or musicians with similar conditions.

- **Allow freedom within reasonable limits**

on clothing, hairstyle, makeup, and other age-appropriate choices encountered by your teen. Talk openly about the relationship between an identity we choose to represent and its effect on our body image and self-esteem.

- **Critique and discuss superficial portrayals**

of men and women in commercials, movies, and other media to help child expand their definition of beauty and develop a greater sense of acceptance for their own appearance.

- **Provide options and support**

to help them embrace the attributes of their disability that affect their appearance. When possible, customize adaptive equipment, casts, and braces. These aids are more than medically-necessary devices; they are also statements of style!

Success outside of school:

Help your child experience success and self-esteem in activities beyond the school walls!

Adapted from the Minnesota Parent Pages Newsletter - www.PACER.org/mpc

There's more to life than school! School can be a tough place for kids with learning difficulties. Academic demands, coupled with feelings that he's different from his peers, can lead to stress and frustration and may be the first step on the road to damaged self-esteem.

You know this recipe all too well. You watch your child work twice as hard as his classmates to complete homework assignments and see him equating academic difficulty with being a failure. As an adult, you know that there's much more to life than school. **You know that success and self-esteem have little to do with grade-point averages.** But kids may have trouble seeing beyond the school routine. You can help your child gain some perspective, and a self-esteem boost, by guiding him toward activities that play to his strengths and offer opportunities for success.

When looking for ways to make your child feel successful, consider this: **No one knows him as well as you do.** You understand his strengths, weaknesses, and interests better than anyone. Use this knowledge when choosing activities, even if it means bypassing what all the other kids in the neighborhood are doing in favor of something more suited to him.

Suggested strategies:

Extracurricular Activities

- * Enroll him in activities outside school: Clubs, sports, art, and music offer athletic and creative opportunities for your child. With your guidance, let him select activities that he's interested in.
- * For all extracurricular activities, collaborate with group leaders and coaches about your child's learning difficulties. The leader will be able to work with him more effectively, and he'll learn that a learning difficulty is not something to hide.
- * Find out if a class or club is based on interest or aptitude — be sure that you're not enrolling your child who is merely curious about astronomy in a club for astronomy experts!
- * Ask about the typical activities and match them with your child's energy level — classes with lectures or a lot of quiet time could be a poor match for a restless child.
- * Attend a meeting or two with your child on a trial basis. Be sure the leader's style and pace are compatible with your child's.
- * For a child who works best in small groups, consider private or semi-private lessons rather than large classes.

Activities at home

- ♦ Give your child daily or weekly jobs: His success with regular chores will help him develop a sense of responsibility and the knowledge that he's contributing to the family.
- ♦ If he's interested, let him help with special projects like painting or carpentry.
- ♦ For the child who has difficulty with organization or memory, set out everything he'll need to accomplish his daily or weekly jobs without nagging or frustration.
- ♦ Let your child teach you or others: Kids naturally love to teach and help others.
- ♦ Play with your child: Play for play's sake is a great way to relax and have fun together.
- ♦ Let your child lead. Join him in activities that he enjoys and is good at. Computer or video games are an area where he may have more skill than you — let him show you how far he can progress while you're still stuck on level one.

Exposure to a wide variety of activities contributes to learning in fun and non-stressful ways. Don't force your child to excel, but let him enjoy many new experiences. Help him set realistic goals and celebrate the small achievements. With each success, you'll see your child gain confidence that will spill over into other areas of his life.

Did you know that the Oklahoma Parents Center has a FACEBOOK page?!

<http://www.facebook.com/OklahomaParentsCenter>

The Oklahoma Parents Center can now be found on Facebook! We list our upcoming trainings, current events, and our favorite quotes as well as answer any questions you may have for us.

Please come and check us out!

Add us to your list of friends today!



Contact Us

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Aug 5th
Aug 10th
Aug 12th
Aug 14th
Aug 19th
Aug 26th
Sept 2nd
Sept 7th
Sept 10th
Sept 14th
Sept 14th-16th
Sept 16th
Sept 21st
Oct 26th

Basic Rights Training*Moore*6:30 p.m.
Basic Rights Training*Warr Acres*4 p.m.
Basic Rights Training*Vinita*6 p.m.
Exceptional Families Resource Fair*TAFB*All Day
IEP Workshop*Bartlesville*6:30 p.m.
Basic Right Training*Broken Arrow*1 p.m.
Autism Support Group Meeting*Miami*5:30 p.m.
Basic Rights Training*Pryor/Chouteau*6 p.m.
DRS Advocacy Conference*Midwest City*All Day
On The Road-OASIS*Ponca City*All Day
Oklahoma Transition Institute*OKC*All Day
OPC Regional Institute*El Reno*All Day
Basic Rights Training*Tahlequah*6 p.m.
On The Road-OASIS*Ada*All Day

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