

Set a Postsecondary Education or Training Destination and Map a Course to Get There

People usually plan journeys with a specific destination in mind, and map the way accordingly. It is important to begin to explore education and training options available to your youth before graduation, then beyond, based on their current interests and abilities. It may be helpful to revisit school or training programs as interests and goals change or as new opportunities become available.

Things to remember

- Parents can help their young adult start exploring postsecondary education or training opportunities.
- Postsecondary programs have varying admissions requirements including entrance or placement exams. Be sure to plan ahead!
- Schools or other agencies may be able to help.

Set a postsecondary education or training destination

When you and your son or daughter are planning for your young adult's journey to postsecondary education or training, you will need to decide on a specific destination or goal and then map a clear course of action to reach it.

The information you gather from the activities and suggestions on the [PACER.org/transition](https://www.pacer.org/transition) website will help you determine the destination or postsecondary goal. It is important to choose the program and environment that fits your son or daughter's personality, learning style, and needs. Refer to the publication [Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now](#) for more information about available postsecondary programs.

Map a course

Once you and your young adult have decided what kind of postsecondary education program they're interested in, you'll need to find appropriate schools.

- High school counselors and teachers are resources for this type of information.
- You can also call post-secondary school admission officers to request brochures and fact sheets about the school and its programs. Schools almost always include information about their programs online.
- If possible, visit the school with your young adult to see how he or she would fit in and if the atmosphere is a comfortable one.

When trying to find a school or program that is good for your son or daughter, consider what the requirements are for admissions.

- Determine if your son or daughter needs a certain grade point average to be accepted.
- Ask if he or she needs recommendations from high school teachers and community members, and if so, consider who would be the best recommenders.

- Be prepared by organizing a file of important documents.

Entrance/placement exams

Most college and university programs require students to take an entrance exam before they are admitted into the program. The most common admissions tests are the SAT and the ACT. These tests should be taken during your student’s junior year or at the beginning of the senior year in high school. Test accommodations for students with disabilities are available for those who qualify and should be applied for in advance.

Some two and four year institutions, particularly vocational colleges, require students to take ACCUPLACER® tests to determine their ability in math, reading, and writing. These are not admissions tests—they do not decide if a student will be admitted to the school. These placement exams determine what level of classes would be most appropriate for your student, and whether remedial classes are necessary. For more information on the ACCUPLACER® test, visit: www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html.

Financial aid

You will also want to consider financial aid for postsecondary education.

- The career counselor or financial aid officer at your young adult’s high school can tell you how to apply for federal assistance. The amount and type of federal aid the U.S. Department of Education provides doesn’t always depend solely on financial need, so don’t assume you’re not eligible. Take the time to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you find the FAFSA form too difficult to fill out yourself, an income tax preparer will have all the information needed to complete the form for you.
- College admission offices also have resources on scholarship options.
- There are also many internet sites with information on scholarships, such as <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search> or www.scholarships.com.
- Student financial assistance: The U.S. Department of Education provides free information about preparing for and funding education beyond high school. Call (800) 433-3243; (800) 730-8913 TTY; or visit the website: www.studentaid.ed.gov.

For some students, there may be other agencies and organizations to help “map the course.”

You may also want to consider accessing information and services from the following:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- Disability Services office at postsecondary institutions and/or training programs
- Think College: Provides resources, tools, and a database for students, families and professionals who are interested in inclusive postsecondary options for students with intellectual disabilities.
www.thinkcollege.net
- The Heath Resource Center at George Washington University: This online resource provides information on financial aid, scholarships, and student services, and help students with disabilities successfully transition into college, university, career technical schools or other postsecondary programs.
www.heath.gwu.edu
- For a more comprehensive list of available postsecondary resources, visit PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment at www.PACER.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary.

Planning ahead and exploring these resources can start you and your youth on the way to success at a postsecondary education or training destination.