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SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY

TOP 10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

1. **Start planning as soon as possible.** School systems typically begin planning for transition with families when the child turns 14. Many agencies and advisory groups recommend starting 4 or 5 years earlier.
2. **Focus on transition planning in IEPs.** The goals and strengths of the individual should be identified and helping them reach those goals, whether with standard course work or more specialized training, should be the focus of the plan.
3. **Determine if guardianship is appropriate.** Guardianship requires a court appointment once the individual has turned 18. Independence needs to be weighed against safety and security. Full or limited guardianship are both options, as are limited powers of attorney for health care and property matters.
4. **Find an attorney who specializes in special needs planning.** Having a knowledgeable advocate to guide you through the issues and connect you to community resources can be invaluable.
5. **Evaluate post-secondary or vocational education opportunities.** None of us stop learning when we move on from high school. Additional course work may improve employment opportunities and increase independence.
6. **Ensure eligibility for government programs and benefits.** At transition, all the programs that were delivered through the school system stop. Medicaid eligibility makes more programs available for young adults. Assume that applying for either SSI or SSDI will take longer than you expect.
7. **Be creative, be resourceful, and be realistic about employment.** Most young adults with special needs are unable to find full-time paid employment. Targeting positions that will play to an individual's strengths and interests will increase your chances for success as will identifying firms who have histories of hiring special needs individuals.
8. **Seek opportunities for exercise and social interaction.** Illinois has Special Recreation Associations (SRAs) that provide adult programs. Finding opportunities regardless of where you live is important for maintaining or improving physical and mental health.
9. **Locate appropriate housing.** While independent living is often the goal, identifying and pursuing the optimal living arrangement for your young adult should be your priority. Start early as many preferred locations have long waiting lists.
10. **Find time for respite.** Transition takes its toll on the whole family. Often the adult special needs family member requires more time and attention as an adult than he/she did while in school. It is important for everyone to get a break from the challenges of caring for a young adult.

These recommendations are provided solely as a reference and are not intended to replace counseling from qualified professionals. Please contact Mike Walther if you would like more information about Oak Wealth Advisors and our services for families with special needs members.