

# **Transitioning Youth Handbook:** **Navigating the Developmental Disabilities Administration Service System** **2007**



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"The services and facilities of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) are operated on a non-discriminatory basis. This policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin and applies to the provisions of employment and granting of advantages, privileges and accommodations."

"The Department, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensures that qualified individuals with disabilities are given an opportunity to participate in and benefit from DHMH services, programs, benefits, and employment opportunities."

**2007**  
**Transitioning Youth Handbook:**  
**Navigating the**  
**Developmental Disabilities Administration Service System**

Written by:

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This Transitioning Youth Handbook: Navigating the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Service System is designed to inform transitioning students and their families about DDA services and how to access services. This handbook would not have been possible without the time and contributions of many people and organizations. The DDA would like to thank the following individuals who contributed their time and ideas to its development:

*Janet Andrews, St. Mary's County Health Department*

*Vivian Banks, the Arc of Frederick County, Inc.*

*Connie Bumbaugh, ROI*

*Leon Carlton, DDA Central Maryland Regional Office*

*Andre Coates, SMVI*

*Lauren Garren, Charles County Health Department, Resource Coordination*

*Ellen Gural, Family Member*

*Darlene Hughes, Parent*

*Cynthia Johnson, Parent*

*Judy Kanigel, Former GTYI Facilitator, Baltimore County Public Schools*

*Mary Ann Katski, Montgomery County Public Schools, Transition Services*

*Shawn Lattanzio, Montgomery County DHHS, Disability Services*

*Ruth Lipman Kummings, Prince George's County Public Schools, Bowie High*

*Sandy Marron, (former employee) DDA Southern Maryland Regional Office*

*Steve McAbee, DDA Western Maryland Regional Office*

*Mary Scott, GTYI Facilitator, Baltimore County Public Schools*

*Susan Schouster, DDA Headquarters*

*William Snavely, DDA Eastern Shore Regional Office*

*Janice Stallworth, DDA Southern Maryland Regional Office*

*Patti Ulf, Principal, Margaret Brent Special Center*

The DDA would also like to extend its gratitude to ROI and Baltimore County Public Schools for granting permission for the use of their transition materials to aid in the development of this handbook. The DDA would like to thank Mary Scott of the Baltimore County Public Schools and Ellen Gural for their support in editing.

And, special thanks go to members of People First of Harford County and Ms. Tracy Wright for their insight into the importance of employment.

## ***TRANSITIONING TO ADULT LIFE***

Transition, for the purposes of this Handbook, is the period of time when a student begins to prepare for the change from school to adult life. As with any person, this period in life brings many changes as the student with disabilities is faced with new decisions regarding the future. It can be particularly challenging for students with disabilities because in addition to making decisions about a possible career, additional schooling or training—students will make decisions regarding other adult services that are available. With that in mind, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97), was written to “ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living.”

Around the age of fourteen, the student can expect to engage in a variety of new services and activities that prepare them for adult life. Transition services outlined in the IDEA, and identified by the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team, include; instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment and post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In Maryland, students receiving special education services are *entitled* to receive services until they complete the school year in which they turn 21, or have met the requirements of a Maryland high school diploma. However, **once the student is no longer receiving public education, adult services are no longer an entitlement, they are *eligibility* based.** Once the student exits school, it becomes the responsibility of the student and his/her family to arrange for post-secondary education, training, employment or other community options. Therefore, it is critical that the student and his/her family begin exploring the options available to adults with disabilities as early as possible.

## **THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION**

The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is one of several agencies that offer services to individuals with developmental disabilities. The DDA is a state-funded agency that operates under the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). The mission of the DDA is to provide leadership to assure the full participation of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in all aspects of community life. In addition, the DDA's goal is to promote their empowerment to access quality supports and services necessary to foster personal growth, independence and productivity.

The DDA provides a coordinated service delivery system so that individuals with developmental disabilities receive appropriate services oriented toward the goal of integration into the community. The DDA provides services to approximately 22,000 individuals statewide. Services are provided through a wide array of community based services delivered primarily through a network of approximately 170 private providers. The DDA, licenses, funds and regulates these community based services through four regional offices. The regional offices are responsible for developing, coordinating, and evaluating services to ensure a comprehensive, effective service delivery system. Regional offices are located in Hagerstown, Salisbury, Owings Mills, and Laurel. Community services include residential programs, community supported living arrangements, individual family care placements, day programs, supported employment, resource coordination, transportation, and a variety of family, individual and behavioral support services.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOVERNOR'S TRANSITIONING YOUTH INITIATIVE

### *The Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative (GTYI)*

The Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative (GTYI) was designed in 1989 to demonstrate that people with the most severe disabilities can work and contribute to Maryland's future after leaving school. Through the Initiative, the DDA has been able to fund supported employment and other day services for over 4,500 eligible students exiting school, many of whom are successfully employed in their communities today.

One of the goals of the Initiative was to create collaborative interagency efforts between various state and local agencies to ensure a seamless transition from school to adult life. Local schools integrate practical job skills training into the curriculum; develop individual transition plans; and by no later than the spring prior to the student's last year of school, refer student's to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). At that time, DORS will assist the student and family in applying for DDA services; assist with placing the student in available summer employment programs before the last year in school; and consult with the student and family regarding appropriate adult supported employment providers. When notified by DDA that the student is eligible for DDA supported employment services, the DORS counselor refers the student to the selected provider and often purchases job coaching and related employment services while the student is still in the education setting. The DDA provides the funding for long-term support of the eligible student after he/she exits school.

### *GTYI Services Available through the DDA*

**Supported Employment Services** are community-based services that provide the supports necessary for individuals to obtain and maintain work in the community. Supports may include job skills training, job development, vocational assessment, and ongoing job coaching support.

**Day Services** are facility-based services that provide vocational assessment, job training, work skills training, social and other skills training.

## WHO QUALIFIES FOR THE GTYI?

*It is important to understand that DDA services are not an entitlement. Individuals must apply for and be determined eligible for services and funding must be available in order to receive services.* Under the GTYI, a student qualifies for services if he/she is eligible for services offered by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and is eligible as a person with a "Developmental Disability" (DD) through the DDA as defined below. According to definitions found in Health General Article, Title 7, Developmental Disabilities Law, 10.22.18.03, individuals shall be eligible for DD Services if they have a severe, chronic disability that:

- a) Is attributable to a physical or mental impairment other than the sole diagnosis of mental illness, or to a combination of mental and physical impairments;
- b) Is manifested before the individual becomes 22 years old;
- c) Is likely to continue indefinitely;
- d) Results in an inability to live independently without external support or continuing and regular assistance; and
- e) Reflects the need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services that are individually planned and coordinated for the individual.

**In addition to these requirements, in order to be eligible to receive GTYI funding, the individual is eligible from their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday to their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. If the date of graduation (exit) is after the individual's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, the individual shall continue to be eligible for 1 year after the date of "graduation" (exit.)**

## Why Supported Employment?

According to Ask Me!, the DDA's statewide quality of life survey, "transportation availability and employment services offer the greatest predictions of people's quality of life." (Bohnam, Basehart, Marchand, 2002) Research has proven that work in the community provides income, self-esteem and personal value for individuals. According to one self advocate in Maryland, "working in the community allows you the opportunity to grow and make connections that can last a lifetime." Several self advocates who were surveyed by the DDA regarding the value of working said that work means "feeling good about myself," "feeling useful to my community," and "feeling valuable." Many of the individuals surveyed reported that they feel a greater sense of independence and empowerment by working and earning money.

Perhaps it is best said in the words of Tracy Wright, self-advocate, Ask Me! Interviewer and member of People On the Go of Maryland, the Maryland statewide self-advocacy group. "Life is about community. Why wouldn't you want to work in the place that you live? Working gives the community an opportunity to get to know you and work with you. By working you can be a part of helping people to understand not to fear disability and to breakdown stereotypes because WE CAN WORK!"

The average wage in sheltered settings (day services) is below minimum wage - \$2.46 per hour; average weekly earnings are \$64. Average earnings of people in integrated employment (supported employment) are consistently 250% to 300 % higher than those in segregated workshops. (Butterworth, Gilmore, and Kiernan, 2000) While earning money is very empowering, it may also cause individuals with disabilities concern, as they fear the loss of their health insurance and/or cash benefits through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). However today there are many programs and work incentives, such as the pending Medicaid buy-in program in Maryland and the Social Security Administration's Benefits Outreach and Assistance Program, that assist people with maintaining their health insurance and cash benefits while still earning money. The DDA supported employment provider can assist individuals with navigating these various programs and services.

Supported Employment is grounded in the belief that all people have strengths, interests, preferences, and an innate ability to perform work competently when offered choices, respect, support, and opportunities. (Griffin and Hammis, 2000). There are many thousands of occupations that people with disabilities can pursue in their communities, based on their interests and skills. (Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), 2001). People with even the most significant disabilities in Maryland can and do work in many businesses, such as large corporations, small owner-operated businesses and government jobs. Some examples of community jobs include Red Lobster, Marshall's department store, a local radio station, Aberdeen Proving Ground, the local library, and Pizza Hut.

People with disabilities have demonstrated their ability to work in the community if provided a good job match and appropriate ongoing supports. Supported employment works because people learn their jobs on-the-job, with the supports they need to succeed. (APSE, 2001) Supports vary according to individual need. Some people need more support than others to be successful.

Structure and work hours in the community can also be designed to meet each individual's needs. (APSE, 2001) It should be noted that not all jobs are from "9-5". The DDA recognizes that some people need support during the hours of 9-5 because their caregiver is not at home during those hours. The supported employment provider can assist the individual with finding other meaningful activities and/or supports necessary during the hours that the individual needs support. For example, a person may work from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at a restaurant and from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. they may volunteer at a local nursing home.

Another type of employment that falls under the auspices of supported employment is self-employment. In this type of employment the individual is supported by the DDA supported employment provider to start his or her own business. Some businesses that have been started with the help of DDA include a shredding company, a gift basket company, a concierge service, and a hot dog stand. In supported employment the sky is the limit for people with disabilities.

## OTHER DDA SERVICES

Eligibility for DDA Services does not impact an individual's eligibility for services provided by another public or private agency. In addition to the services funded under the GTYI, the following DDA services may also be available to individuals who meet the "DD" eligibility criteria, based on the availability of funding.

**Community Residential Services:** These services accommodate the wide range of choices individuals and their families make about how to live in the community. Community residential models are designed to give preference to small and individualized settings. Individuals with developmental disabilities have the same range of options about where to live in the community as are available to all people. The Administration respects personal choice regarding decisions about where and with whom individuals may live. The level and type of supports may vary from drop-in services to 24-hour supports, depending on the needs of each individual. Current community residential service models include community supported living arrangements (CSLA), alternative living units (ALU), group homes, and individual family-care homes (IFC). The differences between these services are the number of individuals living in the home and who owns/rents the property.

- **CSLA** are services to assist an individual in non-vocational activities necessary to enable that individual to live in his/her own home, apartment, family home or rental unit with no more than two other non-related recipients of services, or an unlimited number of family members.
- **ALU** is a residence owned, leased, or operated by a licensee that admits not more than 3 individuals and provides more than 10 hours of supervision per week.
- **Group home** is a residence owned, leased, or operated by a licensee that admits at least four, but not more than eight individuals and provides 10 or more hours of supervision per week.
- **Individual Family Care** is a private, single family residence which provides a home for up to three individuals with developmental disabilities, who are unrelated to the care provider.

An individual who does not meet the definition of an individual with a developmental disability, which is defined on page 7, although not eligible for the GTYI or residential services may be eligible for "Support Services" which are described below. The individual must have a "severe, chronic disability", which is caused by a physical or mental condition other than a sole diagnosis of mental illness and is likely to continue indefinitely.

**Support Services:** These are various in-home supports for people who are either "DD" or support services eligible. Some examples of support services include:

- **Family and Individual Support Services (FISS)** are services that are designed to be flexible and dynamic to meet the needs of individuals or families desiring specific areas of support. FISS cover a wide array of supports and are provided by making use of resources available in the community, while at the same time, building on the individual's existing support network. Examples of FISS include, but are not limited to, supports involving budgeting, medication administration, job coaching, transportation, respite care, behavioral supports, developing relationships, environmental modifications, and adaptive equipment.
- **Behavioral Support Services** are designed to assist individuals who exhibit challenging behaviors in acquiring new skills, gaining social acceptance and becoming full participants in the community.

## ACCESSING DDA SERVICES

Students with developmental disabilities are entitled to a free, appropriate public education through the end of the school year in which the student turns 21 years of age, through the Maryland State Department of Education. After a student leaves the school system, ***ADULT SERVICES ARE NOT AUTOMATICALLY PROVIDED. Individuals are not entitled to adult services; they must be eligible for the services and funds must be available.***

If you or your family member have a developmental disability and will be turning 21 within the next few years and you have not already begun to do so, you will need to actively explore options available for adult services. You should request a transition packet from the student's transition facilitator if it is not presented to you at the IEP meeting. The packet should include a DDA application.

Families should help students **apply for services by the age of 14**. However, if a student is over 14 it is not too late to apply. Application for services can be made through the student's local school, by contacting your local regional DDA office directly, or by visiting the DDA website at [www.ddamaryland.org](http://www.ddamaryland.org). However, coordinating these efforts through your local school system will better ensure a smooth transition upon exiting school. Students and their families should fill out the application carefully and return it to school as quickly as possible. Be sure to make a copy for yourself. If you have questions or need help, call the student's teacher or transition facilitator.

The transition facilitator will submit the application to the appropriate DDA Regional Office, along with documentation provided by the teacher, once the application is received. The DDA will review the application to determine eligibility, based on the eligibility criteria listed on page 7. If an individual is determined to be eligible for services, the individual is then assigned one of the following priority categories. These are listed in the order of priority in which applicants shall receive services, based upon available funding: Category I - Crisis Resolution, Category II - Crisis Prevention or Category III - Current Request/Future Need.

## PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION PERIOD

### Beginning at the age of 14, the student should:

- Participate in a variety of work training experiences (paid or volunteer) in school and in the community.
- Start developing a resume of job and work training experiences.
- Be an active participant at IEP meetings.
- Begin to consider employment and community living goals. The student should think seriously about the kind of work that he/she would like to do after leaving school and where he/she might live in the future.
- Practice self-advocacy skills. He/she should learn to speak up about what his/her needs and interests are.

### Beginning at the age of 14, the family should:

- Assist the student with applying for DDA Services.**
- Develop a "vision" with the student based on his/her strengths and interests.
- Be an active member of the transition IEP meetings, working carefully
- with the student and school to develop transition goals, which cover the areas of employment, social and interpersonal relationships, independent living, self-advocacy, and communication.
- Maintain a personal transition file, which includes the most current assessments, recommendations, and resume.
- Attend parent workshops offered through your local school about transition planning, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and financial planning.

### Between the ages of 18-20 the family should:

- Become familiar with available adult services.
- One month before the student turns 18; he/she can apply for SSI by calling 1-800-772-1213. Once the individual turns 18 the family income is no longer considered for eligibility purposes because the individual is considered an adult. In Maryland, once an individual is determined eligible for SSI they are automatically entitled to receive Medicaid Health Insurance, (MA). MA provides a comprehensive health care plan. Once an individual begins receiving DDA services, existing MA eligibility will help to streamline the process for enrollment in the Home and Community Based Waiver (Waiver). The Waiver is an avenue that allows the DDA to receive a fifty percent match in federal to state dollars for many DDA services. Receiving this

federal match allows the DDA to stretch its dollars further in order to serve more people. For more information about MA or the Waiver, you can visit the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's website at:

[www.dhmh.state.md.us/mma/waiverprograms/html/overview.htm](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/mma/waiverprograms/html/overview.htm).

- Prior to the student's last year of school, he/she should apply for DORS. To locate the closest DORS office, call 410-554-9385, 1-888-554-0334 or visit [www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us).

**During the spring prior to the last year of school the student/family should:**

- Attend a Transitioning Youth Fair through the local school system.
- Visit and interview at least 3 DDA adult service providers (providers), if available in your area. Your transition facilitator or teacher may assist you with this process. For suggestions on how to interview providers, see TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING PROVIDERS on the pages that follow.

**During the last year of school the student and family should:**

- Request that DORS develop an individualized plan for employment prior to the student's exit from school, if the student applied for DORS services.
- Select a provider, by no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> of the final school year, and inform the student's teacher of this choice.
- Complete the provider application for the provider you have selected.
- If, after reviewing your application, the provider agrees to offer the student services, the provider will contact you to ask that you assist them with the development of a service funding plan. The plan describes the services needed and the anticipated costs. The provider or resource coordinator will submit the plan to the DDA regional office for approval.
- Once approved, and prior to graduation, you will receive a letter from the DDA informing you of the start date for services.

\* Please note that because of limited funding, DDA services do not necessarily begin the day after the student exits school. Services could begin anytime between July and December of the year the student exits school. Contingency plans for supports should be made in the event that funding is not immediately available. This plan should be discussed at the IEP meeting well in advance of the student's anticipated exit date.

## TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING PROVIDERS

Not all adult service providers offer the same services. It is important that you learn as much information as possible about each provider and the services they offer before making a decision as to which provider you will select. One of the ways that you can learn some basic information about which providers are available in your area is by reviewing the *DDA Guide to Services*. The *Guide* not only includes information about each provider and the services they offer, it also provides a list of suggested questions to ask when interviewing providers. The *Guide* is available through your student's transition teacher/facilitator, by contacting your DDA regional office or through your resource coordinator, if one has been assigned. This information is also available via the Internet by visiting the DDA's website at [www.ddamaryland.org](http://www.ddamaryland.org). Simply click on services.

In addition to these resources, it is also strongly recommended that you visit several providers in person so that you can take a tour of the various services that each has to offer. Ask the provider if you can tour an ALU, a supported employment work-site, etc., while the people receiving supports are present. This will give you an opportunity to talk with some of the individuals receiving supports.

During your interview with the provider, you should:

- ◆ Have a list of prepared questions, such as those included in the *Guide*. Ask all the questions you had prepared. If you forget to ask something, contact the provider again.
- ◆ Ask to take a tour of the various programs, while people receiving services are present.
- ◆ Notice how comfortable you feel talking to the people at each provider agency. Are they responsive to your questions? Do they return calls in a timely fashion? How do they treat the individual's receiving services? Your interview experience may be a reflection of your future experience with that provider. Take notes so that you can remember what you did and did not like about each provider.
- ◆ If you are not excited about any of your choices, consider interviewing more providers. This is a critical life choice for students and families!

## **GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS IN THE DDA SYSTEM**

Community Based - Services are provided in the community where people with and without disabilities work, live and spend their free time, versus a segregated setting where all of the individuals in a particular setting have a disability.

Day Habilitation Program - A program where vocational skills are taught in a learning format and practiced on simulated work or contract work.

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) - A state agency that provides short term funding for evaluation, training, supported employment, restoration services, (e.g. wheelchairs, hearing aids, home modifications, vehicle modifications), career counseling and job placement assistance.

Eligible - Must qualify for services by meeting specific requirements.

Enclave - A group of eight or fewer individuals with developmental disabilities that works as a single team in a single community work site.

Entitlement - Services are guaranteed.

Individual Job Placement - An individual works in the community along side people without disabilities for a community based employer.

Individual Plan (IP) - A plan that specifies assessments, services, supports and training required by the individual. The IP is directed by the individual and is outcome oriented and includes the individual's strengths, needs, preferences, and desires.

IP Team Meeting - A meeting held at least annually, with the individual, resource coordinator, if applicable, staff, and any other persons identified by the individual such as family, friends, and professionals, at which the team reviews current progress and life situations, sets goals and outlines the steps and strategies to meet the established goals.

Job Development - Encompasses all aspects of assistance in locating a job.

Medical Day Program - is a program designed to support individuals who have been deemed eligible with intensive medical support and/or assistance with activities of daily living such as toileting or eating. This program is paid for by medical assistance.

Mobile Work Crew - A group of eight or fewer individuals with developmental disabilities that operate as a single team moving from one work site to another, performing contracted tasks such as custodial and ground maintenance.

Provider or Licensee - A service agency licensed and funded by the State of Maryland to provide supports to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Resource Coordination (Also sometimes referred to as Service Coordination or Targeted Case Management) - These services are available to individuals deemed eligible for services from the Administration, including individuals on the waiting list. The level and intensity of resource coordination may vary according to the individual's needs and desire for resource coordination. Resource coordination is designed to provide assistance in implementing individual choice, addressing individual satisfaction, and assuring that the individual's needs and preferences are addressed.

Respite Services - These are relief services provided to the family or care provider to meet planned or emergency situations.

Transition Fair - This is a forum of representatives from community adult service providers (colleges, support groups, provider agencies, DDA, DORS, etc.) to share information about the various programs and services available in the adult service system.

Transitioning Youth (TY) - Term used to describe students who exit special educational programs at the age of 21.

Workshop (Sheltered Workshop) - A work site at which vocational and job skills are taught, usually in the form of contract work, in a work-simulated environment sponsored by an agency. The agency pays the individual, usually at sub-minimum wages, for the work completed.

## **DDA REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION**

The DDA Regional Offices are responsible for facilitating the delivery of services to individuals residing in various counties and/or cities located in each region. You can apply for DDA services by contacting your local DDA Regional Office or by visiting the DDA website at [www.ddamaryland.org](http://www.ddamaryland.org)

### ***CENTRAL MARYLAND REGIONAL OFFICE***

DDA CMRO  
Rosewood Lane  
Owings Mills Maryland 21117  
410-902-4500  
410-363-9430 (TDD)

Anne Arundel County  
Baltimore County  
Baltimore City  
Harford County  
Howard County

### ***EASTERN SHORE REGIONAL OFFICE***

1500 Riverside Drive  
Salisbury, Maryland 21801  
410-334-6920  
1-888-219-0478  
1-800-735-2258 (TDD)

Caroline County  
Cecil County  
Dorchester County  
Kent County  
Queen Anne's County  
Somerset County  
Talbot County  
Worcester County  
Wicomico County

### ***SOUTHERN MARYLAND REGIONAL OFFICE***

312 Marshall Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Laurel, Maryland 20707  
301-362-5100  
1-888-207-2479  
301-362-5131 (TDD)

Calvert County  
Charles County  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
St. Mary's County

### ***WESTERN MARYLAND REGIONAL OFFICE***

1360 Marshall Street  
Hagerstown Maryland 21740  
301-791-4670  
1-888-791-0193  
301-791-4015 (TDD)

Allegany County  
Carroll County  
Frederick County  
Garrett County  
Washington County

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Paul Wehman, Editor, (2000). TRN. *Supported Employment in Business: Expanding the Capacity of Workers with Disabilities.*

Cary Griffin & Dave Hammis. Rural Institute, University of Montana, (2000). TRN. *What Comes After What Comes Next: Self Employment As The Logical Descendant of Supported Employment.*

## Other Resources

*Transition Planning and Anticipated Services Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process: An informational guide for students, families and professionals.* Maryland State Department of Education. Third edition, revised January 2001. Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, TEL: 410-767-0249, FAX: 410-333-8165.

*For Students and Their Families: Vocational Rehabilitation in Maryland.* Division of Rehabilitation Services, Maryland State Department of Education. Workforce and Technology Center, 2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218-1696, TEL: 410-554-9100, 1-888-200-7117, FAX: 410-554-9112, WEBSITE: [www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)