

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

BOOK 4 / AGES 14 - 22







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This Series

This series is about you and your child with disabilities. Throughout the series, we will use parent to identify the adult(s) caring for a child with disabilities - even though, many times, that person may be a grandparent, foster parent or other relative. We know there are all kinds of parents and families.

Too often as a parent or caregiver, we all feel overwhelmed. As the parent of a child with disabilities, you probably have additional concerns. This series was developed with parents to help you understand some of the special issues you may face. Throughout the series, you will find exercises, examples, and success stories that may help you understand how to help your child be as independent as possible. Each booklet is based on your child's age and covers 6 important areas: Community Involvement, Independence, Health & Wellness, Finance, Employment Skills and Self-Advocacy.

Special Advice for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Your child may be ahead in some areas and need more specialized work in others. Since this series is designed to help children with all types of disabilities, your child may have excellent verbal skills but poor mobility - or in the case of autism, great mobility but poor interaction with others. Use the suggestions as a guide to think about the areas of development that you need to stress.



Your child's disability may make it difficult to follow all the suggestions in this booklet. But just because something may be harder than usual for you or your child, doesn't mean you should give up. **Our goal is to help guide you in raising a strong, independent, well-adjusted child who happens to have a disability.** As you come to a crossroads, ask yourself, "Is this something my child will need to be able to do in the future?" If you say yes, then how can you adapt the situation so your child can be successful?



Making the Future Happen

Now it's time to develop concrete plans about the future. Every high-school age student has a vision about their future. However, many of them struggle to move toward their dreams because they don't have a plan. Your child can be three steps ahead of their peers by making the future happen and not just letting it happen.



Whether your child’s future includes college, a vocational program or going right into a job, having a concrete plan will give direction to the dreams and promote forward progress.

This chart may be able to help your child structure their plans. Have your child think about what the future should look like. Is that future going to require more training or education? Is it going to require special assistance, on-going medical care, or some other support that needs to be in place to be successful?

My Plan For	My Plan	Things I still need Places I can get information Special considerations
Housing - a place to live		
Income - how will I support myself		
Transportation - how will I get around		
Medical Care - where will I get treatment		
Insurance - how will I pay for it		
Recreation - what activities do I do for fun		
Other _____		
Other _____		
Other _____		

Emotional Support / Community Involvement

This is the time when life-long friendships may start. But it's also a time when deep heartbreak, social isolation and bullying can devastate your child's sense of self-worth. Make sure that you are aware of what's happening with your child's friends and classmates. While we encourage children to learn and practice skills that allow them to handle their own problems, some problems are too big and require the intervention or advice of a parent, relative, teacher, religious leader or school counselor. Make sure your child knows who they can talk to if they don't feel they can talk to you about something.





Independence / Self-Care

Expect your child to begin taking responsibility for transportation and personal problems – stress using creative solutions to problems. Give your child more responsibility in taking care of their own laundry, helping with housekeeping, etc. Soon your child may be living in their own apartment or in a college dorm and will need to be able to do a lot more of their own housekeeping chores.

Health & Wellness

If possible, now is the time for your child to take responsibility for their medical treatment. Your child will soon be moving from care by a pediatrician and start seeing a doctor who specializes in adult care. Adult care doctors will generally expect your child to be knowledgeable about their own medical conditions and be responsible for making good health decisions. You can help your child to come up with creative solutions to communicating effectively with medical personnel, like having a personal health care notebook or keeping notes on a cell phone or other assistive technology device.



Health Care Checklist

- I can describe how my medical condition affects my daily life.
- I can name my medications and when I need to take them (or carry a list of them).
- I know what I need to do to stay healthy.
- I participate in healthcare visits by communicating for myself (not having my parent speak for me).
- I know how to reach my doctor in a medical emergency.
- I carry proof of my health care coverage (insurance) with me in case of a medical emergency.







Finances

By this time, your child should be doing as much independently as possible – using personal money, if possible, for clothing, gifts, and personal items. Your child should be saving for the future and starting to think about adult budgeting. Review your monthly bills and expenses with your child. Understanding how much money it will take to support the future can be an important stepping-stone to planning a career. Have your child estimate monthly living expenses once they finish school – rent, utilities, phone, food, transportation, clothing, gifts and recreation.

Employment Skills

High school is the time for your student to ‘try out’ all the things that she finds interesting. Community projects, volunteer activities, and summer programs through your school or local junior college give your student the chance to see what she finds interesting and challenging. Have your child research employment opportunities in a field they enjoy. A good source is the US Bureau of Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/emp/>. Extra-curricular activities available through your school or park district can provide your child with new experiences and could stimulate new ideas about a career path.

This may also be the time to let your student try a part-time job, volunteer opportunities or an internship to give them insight into the work world. These experiences will also make them more competitive with prospective employers since they will be one step ahead of many of their peers.





Self-Advocacy

Expect your child to resolve situations independently – to look for creative solutions to problems. Help your child to be open to input and ideas from others. When your child interacts with someone else who has overcome life obstacles, encourage your child to find out how that person became successful. Some sample questions:

- What was the hardest thing you've had to overcome? What made it so difficult?
- How did you overcome the problem?
- Were there any other options you considered? Why did you choose that solution?

As your child learns how other people move past problems with their own creative solutions, your child will begin to build a 'tool-kit' of answers they may need to resolve their own future problems.

Support your child to be actively involved in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This is a great way to practice self-advocacy and self-determination. These skills will be used over and over again as your child works to become successful in all areas of adult life.

Great Expectations Series:

Book 1 - Age 0 to 3

Book 2 - Pre-school

Book 3 - Grade School

Book 4 - High School & Beyond

Additional web resources including community supports and disability-specific organizations to support parents of children with disabilities are available at:

www.illinoisworknet.com



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