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SPED NEWS

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Parent Edition

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Parental Planning for Adulthood for the Most Severely Disabled Children

Maybe you've already adjusted to the fact that your child will be getting a special education diploma and not a regular high school diploma, but are you ready for what comes after that last day of school? Where will they work? Who will be their guardian when you are gone and how will they be provided for? Where will they live? These are all tough questions to answer and each one requires a lot of planning.

Finding a job the student can do and is comfortable with takes up the last couple years at school and the first few years after high school ends. Depending on your child's ability level and the amount of supervision she or he will need, this could be an easy or difficult placement. While your son or daughter is still in school, the teacher and the Vocational Rehabilitation manager are the two best points of contact for information. They will encourage your ideas.

One of the first things you need to do around the time your child turns 18 years old is apply for **conservatorship**; that is, continued guardianship of the adult child so that you can legally represent him or her in money matters and medical emergencies. This process involves you getting a lawyer for the child and another lawyer for you, then getting some time before a judge once all of the paperwork is in order. However, the expense and trouble can be worthwhile for the problems it helps you avoid.

Once your daughter or son leaves school (and even before that), the **Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS)** is a valuable point of contact. DMRS provides training from time to time in what is available and how to apply for services. In East Tennessee, their number is (865) 588-0508. Sevier County is also one of the few that can use the respite care and job training services of Douglas Cooperative, Inc. DCI's local number is (865) 428-3423.

DMRS also keeps a waiting list for those who need services. While you are able to care for your child, they stay pretty far down the list. However, if you become unable to care for your severely disabled son or daughter, they move up the list quickly.

It is your task to **name a guardian** for your son or daughter and you should do so in writing. In fact, you should create a **special needs trust** for them, with specific instructions for the trustee and guardian you choose. Another advantage of having a trust in place is that it protects any assets you will to them from impacting the government assistance they can receive.

If you have any questions about any parts of this article, please contact Dr. Jeff Romanczuk, Special Education Projects Coordinator, at (865) 453-1036.



Parent Conferences or IEP Meetings that Click

- ❖ An IEP meeting that doesn't last hours? That's a tall order! Make the most of this time with these tips.
 - ❖ **Take notes.** Before the meeting, jot down any concerns you have about your child, along with questions about the curriculum. Take your notes along as a reminder.
 - ❖ Be on time. Teachers are usually on a tight schedule for meetings. If you're punctual, you'll have the maximum talk time.
 - ❖ Stay calm. IF problems arise, focus on ways to work with the teacher on solutions. Kids benefit when parents and teachers are on the same page.
 - ❖ Plan the next step. Discuss how you will follow up on issues raised. You could swap e-mail addresses or phone numbers (jot down best times to talk) or schedule another meeting.
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Do you become embarrassed when your ADHD child yells in the supermarket? According to the American Psychiatric Association these are the **Top 5 Reasons Students with ADHD Misbehave.**

1. They get frustrated because they had a different perception of what was supposed to happen.
 2. They get confused.
 3. They feel overwhelmed with the tasks they are assigned to do.
 4. They are afraid to say they do not understand.
 5. They feel misunderstood and alone.
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Congratulations to Julianna Knigge of Pigeon Forge Middle School. The Sevierville Housing Resident Council Team gave her a certificate of appreciation for her volunteer work during the summer. Thanks for being a great community volunteer, Julianna!

Parents,
This is your newsletter. Are there questions or issues that you have that we could address in the newsletter? You can reach me at 429-5744 or 453-1037, at KayeThomas@Sevier.org or send a note to your child's teacher and it will be forwarded to me. I really want to hear from you.