

Life's a Journey: *Learn More! Do More! Be More!*

Many options are available to North Carolina students with and without disabilities to help them prepare for their adult lives. Whether teens and young adults want to work, attend college, or need support to figure it out, many programs are in place across the state. This fact sheet offers a sampling of opportunities that are currently available as well as resources where you can get more information and keep up with new developments.

The options in the left column are available to high school students, while those on the right are available once students leave high school. Unless noted otherwise, the opportunities listed below are open to people with and without disabilities.

If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. But, whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward
 –Martin Luther King, Jr.

Career Exploration and Training in High School:

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** courses are offered by almost all NC High Schools. These courses count as elective credits toward meeting graduation requirements. CTE courses introduce students to career fields including business, information technology, automotive, horticulture, health sciences, cosmetology, photography, culinary arts, carpentry and more. Consult your school system's high school planning guide or guidance counselor for more information.
- **Internships, Apprenticeships and Service Learning** offer work-based learning experiences in real-world settings. Students spend time working in local businesses, non-profit organizations, medical centers, or government agencies, including the National Guard. They get to see and participate in work activities and learn about jobs from people who actually do them. Your school's Career Development Coordinator or guidance counselor should have more information about opportunities in your local area.
- **Pre-Employment Transition Services** are offered by the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to students with disabilities between ages 14-21. NCDVRS works with schools and a variety of community partners to provide these Pre-ETS services: training in self-advocacy and workplace readiness skills, job exploration, work-based experiences and postsecondary counseling.

Postsecondary Education and Training:

- **Community Colleges** - North Carolina has a very strong community college system that offers a variety of programs that range from Basic Academic Skills, High School completion/ GED preparation to Associate Degrees. Some students later transfer to 4-yr colleges or universities. Other students earn certificates or diplomas in a specific career field or skilled trade. Many community colleges partner with local employers to teach job skills that are needed in their particular industry.
- **Vocational or Technical Schools** - Some of these schools train students for a specific occupation, such as cosmetology, barbering, truck driving or diesel mechanics. Other schools may have multiple programs that teach skills needed for entry-level jobs in particular career fields.
- **Traditional Colleges and Universities** - These schools can be private or publicly funded. They also range in size from very small to extremely large. They offer programs that lead to Bachelor's or graduate degrees. Students select a "major" area of intensive study, but coursework is usually designed to provide a broad base of knowledge across many content areas.
- **College Experience Programs for Students with Developmental Disabilities** - There are currently at least 14 programs for students who have intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities located on community college or university campuses in North Carolina. These programs differ in terms of length, primary focus (e.g., vocational vs. independent living), and the extent to which students are included in the

Postsecondary Education and Training continued>

school's standard course offerings. All of them prepare students to be more fully included in their communities and competitive employment.

- **Project SEARCH**- This is a one-year, school-to-work program for individuals with intellectual or other developmental disabilities who are either in their last year of high school or young adults. Project SEARCH participants receive classroom instruction as well as job skills training while they rotate through several internships in large businesses. There are a growing number of Project SEARCH sites across North Carolina, supported through a collaboration between public schools, community colleges, adult service providers, NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities.
- **T-STEP** - TEACCH School Transition to Employment and Postsecondary Education This program is for 16-21 yr-olds who experience Autism Spectrum Disorder, but do not have an intellectual disability.

T-STEP focuses on some of the “soft skills” that are vitally important to success as an adult. It offers instruction and practice with social, executive function, emotional regulation, and goal achievement skills. T-STEP is currently offered at six community colleges across North Carolina.

- **Local Training Programs** - There are a variety of training programs, internships and apprenticeships in most communities. They may be offered by local government agencies, service providers, businesses, non-profit organizations or educational institutions. You can learn about what is available in your area through <https://www.ncworks.gov/> or local sources of information about community resources.

Believe you can and you're halfway there.

- Theodore Roosevelt

North Carolina Resources for Postsecondary Education and Training College Foundation of North Carolina | <https://www.cfnc.org/>

One-stop shopping for all things related to postsecondary education for NC students. Information and tools for career exploration and planning, choosing and paying for college.

NC Careers | <https://nccareers.org/>

This website has information, tools and resources for choosing a career, finding education and training and searching for employment.

NC Works | <https://www.ncworks.gov/vosnet/youth.aspx>

This page is specifically for youth who want to explore options and prepare for a career of their choice.

NC Postsecondary Education Alliance | <http://www.cid.unc.edu/psea/>

Works to expand postsecondary options for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in North Carolina. You can find a grid with information about existing NC programs.

NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services | <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/vocational-rehabilitation-services>

Provides counseling, training, education and support services to help people with disabilities prepare for, find and maintain employment and live independently.

NC Division of Services for the Blind | <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/services-blind>

Provides services to help people who are visually impaired, blind and deaf-blind reach their goals of independence and employment.

For more information on this topic contact: Exceptional Children's Assistance Center-ECAC



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