

# Transitioning to Independence: OOD's Support for High School Students with Disabilities

## How Does OOD Help?

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) helps **students with disabilities aged 14+** with various disabilities, including physical, learning, mental health, hearing, vision and more, acquire the necessary skills and support to successfully enter the workforce. OOD can help students enrolled in any type of high school program including career technical, homeschool, online, etc. OOD tailors services and supports to empower students to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

It takes an **agency neutral, person-centered, and outcome-focused** approach to coordinate the many resources a student may have available to them for a successful transition from school to work or post-school activities. OOD can be a valuable member of a student's person-centered planning team (i.e. transition team) to ensure coordination of services and identification of a career goal through **backward planning**, starting with the end goal in mind.

OOD helps students develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) which identifies the career goal and necessary services to achieve that goal; each IPE is tailored to an individual student's needs to support them in high school and beyond.

## What are the Benefits to High School Students?

**Career Counseling and Guidance:** OOD helps students further define their career interests by learning about stackable credentials and opportunities to gain work experience that can help develop their career pathway.

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS):** These services assist students by exploring in-demand career options, teaching workplace expectations, discussing training options available after graduation, and building self-advocacy skills.

**Paid Work Experiences:** OOD connects students with a summer youth work experience (typically up to five weeks with a job coach and paid through a stipend) or helps place students in a summer, after school, and/or seasonal jobs to help improve their work skills, try out different jobs, and/or build their work history. In many instances, a job coach may be on site to help students navigate the worksite, provide training, and help them have positive work experiences.

**College and Other Postsecondary Education Assistance:** OOD assists with planning for college or other training after high school, including help exploring majors, completing applications, linking students to supports on campus, and in many cases, tuition assistance. OOD can also help students find internships and apprenticeships that support their career goals.

**Assistive Technology, Accessibility, Transportation, and Other Supportive Services:** OOD provides the necessary assistive technology devices and corresponding training, transportation assistance, work clothing, and supportive services, helping students with disabilities overcome barriers.

**Learn How to Maximize Earnings:** Students who receive public benefits can work with a Work Incentive Consultant on Social Security, Medicaid, and/or other benefits to ensure they understand how to maximize their income and use work incentives available to them.

**Finding and Keeping a Job:** Once a student is ready to look for a permanent position, OOD provides support during their job search including finding job leads, completing online applications, interview preparation, networking, and more. A job coach may also be available to provide follow along services to address any issues that arise on the job.

## How Can I Learn More?

For more information about OOD's services for students with disabilities, visit the [student services webpage](#).



Programs provided by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) are funded, in whole or in part, with federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). For purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), OOD received 78.7% of its funding through the DOE VR grant. In Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, OOD received \$166,384,030 in federal funds. Funds appropriated by the State covered 21.3 % of the total costs, or \$45,031,510. Of these federal funds, \$24,957,605 is set aside for Pre-ETS. For purposes of the Works 4 Me program, OOD received 100% of its funding through the DOE Disability Innovation Fund grant. In FFY 2024, OOD received \$716,175 for this program. For purposes of the Supported Employment (SE) Program, the DOE SE grant funded 90% of the costs for the Supported Employment for Youth with a Disability Program up to the grant amount and 100% of the costs of regular Supported Employment program costs up to the grant amount. In FFY 2024, OOD received \$593,853 for SE Youth with a Disability, and State appropriated funds paid the remaining 10%, or \$65,984 of the total costs. In FFY 2024, OOD received \$593,853 in regular SE grant funds. For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Program, the federal grant received from DOE in FFY 2024 paid 90% of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2024, OOD received \$1,166,389 in federal grant funds. Funds appropriated by the State paid the 10% required match, or \$129,599 of the total costs incurred under the OIB program. For purposes of the Independent Living (IL) Program, the federal grant received from HHS paid 90% of the total costs incurred in FFY 2024. In FFY 2024, OOD received \$646,297 in federal grant funds. Funds appropriated by the State paid the 10% required match, or \$71,811 of the total costs incurred under the IL Program.