

Top Ten Things You Can Do to Plan for Your Future with a Disability

1. Get a Diagnosis of Disability and a Medicaid Waiver

First, find or obtain testing from a psychologist (private or through the schools) that shows an IQ score and developmental disability diagnosis. Then apply for a Waiver, which is a bundle of long-term care supports designed to make the person with a disability as independent and well-supported as possible while they reside in their community. Waiting lists for Disability Waivers are long and these are the waivers with the most supports. Get on the waiting list early! If you also have medical needs, try to use the CCC Plus Waiver while you're waiting for a more comprehensive Disability Waiver. You can also call the state's Waiver assistance hotline at 1-844-603-9248 or visit the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' website at <http://www.mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/> or visit <https://thearcofnova.org/resource-library/#waivers>

Call-	Developmental Disability Waivers	CCC Plus Waiver
Fairfax	703-324-4400	703-324-7948
Arlington	703-228-1700	703-228-1297/703-228-1700 (18+)
Alexandria	703-746-5999	571-213-7963/703-746-5999 (18+)
Loudoun	703-777-0597	703-777-8949

2. Explore Early Intervention Services

All counties offer special support services to young children diagnosed with a disability. Call as soon as you know your child may not be developing as expected and ask about the services that may benefit them. These services are available from birth to age 3, then a similar program called Child FIND works for ages 3-6 years old.

Arlington- 703-228-1630 Alexandria- 703-746-4996 Fairfax- 703-246-7121

<https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/starting-life-child-disability/>

3. Look into Recreation and Social Activities

We're all happier when we have a place to exercise or have some fun. Explore your county's therapeutic recreation department as well as groups like Challenger Baseball, Special Olympics, and Best Buddies for options. Look into People First/Toastmasters, a self-advocacy group run by The Arc of Northern Virginia where everyone learns to share their story and grow their voice.

<http://www.springfieldchallenger.org/>

<http://www.specialolympicsva.org/>, 703-359-4301

<https://thearcofnova.org/advocacy/self-advocacy/>, 703-208-1119 x116

4. Transportation

Having great places to go doesn't mean much unless you can get there. The Arc of Northern VA partnered with Oneder and developed TravelMate, an app to provide supports to learn to ride the bus, train, metro, or cab. Look into Metro's reduced fare or Metro Access program, then apply for Taxi Access. If you receive Medicaid, a free program called Logisticare can provide transportation to and from medical appointments.

<https://thearcofnova.org/program/tfil/>

<https://www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/metro-access/>

<http://transportation.dmas.virginia.gov/Default.aspx>

5. Establish a Special Needs Trust

Consider setting up a Special Needs Trust which is a legal way to protect assets for a person with a disability without disqualifying them from public benefits. <http://thearcofnovatrust.org/>, 703-208-1119.

6. Look Into Public Benefits

If someone has Medicaid under age 21, they are eligible for a program called EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment). This program can provide assistance for medical and non-medical needs. Once a person with a disability is 18 year old, they should be eligible for SSI (Supplemental Security Income) through Social Security if their disability is preventing them from earning a living wage. They may also be eligible for SSDI, a disability based benefit. Once approved, the person should also apply for Medicaid.

*Note- someone at or near the poverty level can apply for SSI and Medicaid at any age.

<http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/>, 800-772-1213
<https://momsinmotion.net/waivers/epsdt/>

7. Explore Supported Decision Making and Legal Authority

If someone will need assistance in making safe and healthy decisions or managing resources, consider looking into legal authority options. A good time to start looking into these services is around age 17 years.

<https://thearcofnova.org/sdm>
<https://thearcofnova.org/resource-library/#legal>

8. Plan for Transition

Aging out of the school system is a tough time as it seems like all mandated services end overnight. Prepare by applying for a Waiver (see #1 above), working with your school's Employment Transition Representative (ETR), local Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), and/or hire a private job coach. Read The Arc of Northern Virginia's Transition POINTS Guide: **"Entering the World of Work"**. It can be downloaded from our website. Tour employment service organizations and have your student complete situational assessments. Plan early!

<https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/entering-world-work/>

DARS, Alexandria Office - 703-960-3411

DARS, Fairfax Office- 703-359-1124

Arlington- 703-228-1413 (or 1416 or 1424)

9. Develop a Plan for Housing and Long Term Living

Think about a long term plan on where to live, how to age in place, and securing a solid future. Explore The Arc of Northern Virginia's six free Transition POINTS Guides at <https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/>. The guides and toolkits cover early intervention, Special Education, Transition, Work, Finding a Home, and Aging with a Disability. Watch our free recorded webinars at <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA>

10. Be an advocate

There are no voices more powerful in changing the world than the voices of a person with a disability and their family. By sharing your story and advocating for local, state, and federal resources you make the world a better place for everyone. You will help create the change we need to see in the world. Consider becoming a member of The Arc of Northern Virginia and join us in advocating for change. Your membership dollars fund free resources for families, trips to Richmond to advocate with legislators, and help support our ongoing programs.

<https://thearcofnova.org/advocacy/>