

Bridging to Adulthood Tips: Exploring Alternative Learning Activities for Life After High School

There are many different meaningful paths for life after high school, including non-academic options. The following resources may be of interest for **youth who are looking for continued learning, life skills, or pre-employment programs (if not going into a trade, college, university, or direct employment)**.

Looking for ideas? Check out the Planning Network's [Personal Story Videos!](#)

1. Free Tutoring and Online Learning

- [Frontier College](#) is a volunteer based organization that offers free basic literacy programs and independent study sessions for Canadians, including young adults with extra learning needs and developmental disabilities.
- [The LearningHUB](#) is a free online program for adults in Ontario. Courses may be live or self-paced. There are a range of topics including life skills, technology, reading, writing and math.

2. Mentorship to Explore Future Possibilities

- [Holland Bloorview Youth Mentor Program](#) is an initiative where youth with disabilities can speak with a trained volunteer about living with a disability.
- [Student Links Mentorship](#) is a free program through Community Living Ontario. Students with intellectual disabilities (ages 14-21) are matched with a mentor in their local community who shares a common interest or passion. The purpose is to help the student explore possibilities for life after high school.

3. Day Programs with a Vocational, Life-Skills or Learning Focus

In Ontario, there are a range of day programs for adults with intellectual disabilities. While many have social and recreational programming, some day programs also focus on life skills or pre-employment skills. Some day programs may offer funded spots through Developmental Services Ontario and/or fee for service options (which Passport funding can often be applied to).

- **Brighton Launch** – [Day Programs](#) – Offers several day program options focusing on life skills and employment experience.
- **Corbrook** – [Learning Opportunities](#) – Corbrook offers full-day and half-day programming as well and one-to-one support for various life skills.
- **Kohai LIFE** – [Day Program](#) – A day program with a focus on life and social skills, functional academics and work placements with community partner organizations.
- **March of Dimes** – [LIFE \(Learning Independence for Future Empowerment\)](#) – A 10-week life-skills program for young adults with disabilities.
- **Reena** – [Channels Day Program and Pathways Day Program](#) – various day program options with a focus on life skills and employment.

4. Alternative High School and Adult Learning Programs

- **Bright Start Academy** – [Foundations Program](#) – Bright Start Academy is a private school in Toronto. The Foundations Program is a transition-focused program for students in a non-credit stream in high school. The program focuses on life skills and work placements.
- **Monsignor Fraser College (Alternative and Adult Secondary School)** – [Transition to Work Program](#) – A program within the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) that offers hands-on co-ops and experiential learning opportunities for special education stream students transitioning from high school. Students aged 18-20 may stay for 1, 2 or 3 years depending on transition and learning goals.
- [Project SEARCH Toronto](#) – A transition-to-work program for students with a primary diagnosis of an intellectual disability. During the final year of high school, students immerse at a host business for three connected experiential learning placements combined with classroom instruction in employment life skills and personalized employment planning. There are programs in Halton and Hamilton as well.
- **Toronto District School Board (TDSB)** – [Essential Skills Upgrading](#) – A non-credit program for adults looking to improve their reading, writing, math, employability and workplace skills.

5.

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

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A teaching hospital fully affiliated with the University of Toronto.

6. Alternative Post-Secondary Programs

- **Inclusive Education programs (Community Integration through Co-Operative Education or CICE)** are offered at several Ontario colleges. These programs are for students with an intellectual disability or other learning challenges who want to continue their learning and experience college life.
- Many **Ontario Colleges** offer **foundational, transition to college programs** (click “Career & Preparation”) that aim to help students explore their potential area of interest, upgrade their academic skills, and enhance their college readiness. Students may then move on to register in college diploma programs.
- **Christian Horizons and Humber College** – **Culinary Skills Development & Employment Program** – This partnership program provides hands on training and work experience for individuals with developmental disabilities looking to work in food services.
- **George Brown College** – **College Vocational Program** – This program provides vocational assessment, upgrading in communications, math, and computers; life skills, career planning and a work experience placement for students with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities.

7. Structured Pre-Employment & Work Placement

- **Brands for Canada** – **EDGE** – A free pre-employment program for adults with disabilities who have completed Grade 10 education or higher.
- **Corbrook** – **Striving for Success** – Pre-employment training program consisting of experiential learning and workplace life-skills curriculum.
- **JVS Toronto** - **Disability Services** – JVS offers various program for adults with learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and intellectual disabilities with employment and life skills workshops, one-on-one employment counselling and on-the-job coaching support.
- **JobSkills** – **Right Fit for You** – A 20 week paid pre-employment training program for youth with disabilities and/or complex barriers to employment who live in Peel Region or York Region. Includes workshop based learning, individual job search support and work placement with on-the-job coaching.

- **Kerry's Place Autism Services – [Employment Works](#)** – A pre-employment training program for adults with an autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities. Includes regular structured learning sessions and virtual experiential learning (e.g. workplace simulations).
- **Project Work – [Project Work Supported Employment Program](#)** – A 29 week program consisting of pre-employment workshops, individual support for job search and on-the-job coaching once employment is obtained. Note: Project Work is partly funded by ODSP Employment Supports (described below).
- **Toronto District School Board (TDSB) – [Adult Learners Employment Services](#)** – Offers job-specific training to adult learners looking to pursue particular career paths such as food services, hair styling and construction.

8. Individual Support for Job Search

- **Ontario Disability Employment Program (ODSP) Employment Supports** – ODSP Employment Supports provide employment services to support individuals 16 years of age and older to find and keep a job. You can access a [full list of ODSP Employment support service providers in Ontario](#). Service providers offer similar types of supports, however there may be differences in the amount/duration of support, types of employer connections and experience level supporting individuals with learning needs and/or communication challenges. Examples of ODSP Employment Supports service providers in the GTA include.
 - [Community Living Toronto](#)
 - [Corbrook - Individual Service Employment Programs](#)
 - [March of Dimes](#)
- **Aptus - [Career Navigator Program](#)** – A free 1 year soft skills training and career exploration program for youth who identify with disability and/or communication challenges. Ongoing individual meetings with a Youth Supervisor can support you with job search and career exploration. Offers optional weekly work-skills workshops. Note: Program is open to youth with various volunteering and employment interests (not just an interest in being a home service professional as listed on program flyer).
- **Dream Weavers – [1:1 Life and Employment Skills Sessions](#)** – Dream Weavers provides 1:1 and group employment and life skills sessions for young adults on the autism spectrum or with other developmental differences. Sessions are provided by an Occupational Therapist (there may be coverage through Ontario Autism Program, Passport Funding or extended health benefits plans).

- **Montage Support Services – [Making Work Work \(fee for service options\)](#)** – Montage offers fee-for-service supported employment service focused on helping adults with disabilities to reflect on their strengths and interests and explore different types of volunteer and/or paid work.
- **Reena – [Reena Supported Employment Service \(RSES\)](#)** – For youth and young adults with developmental disabilities including autism who live in York Region. Individual and group-based support for job-search and start-up. Please note that services are currently on hold; check back to the website for updates.

Tips for Choosing a Program

- Knowing your personal goals can help you choose a continued learning or pre-employment program that is a good fit for you.
- Look at a variety of programs and consider pros and cons of each.
- Seek information about the program from different sources e.g. websites, phoning the program staff, going to an information session or in-person tour
- Ask questions! Examples might include:
 - Can you describe your program/ service?
 - Is there a waitlist for your program?
 - Are there any program pre-requisites?
 - Is the program free or is there a cost?
 - Is there funding to help cover costs? E.g. Passport Funding, Ontario Autism Program, extended health benefits, charitable funding or grants?
 - What is the program schedule? Virtual or online?
 - What is the staff ratio? What are the staff qualifications and training?
 - Is the building physically accessible (as applicable)?
 - Where are you located? Is the program accessible by transit?
 - How do you include families in your services?
 - What are your outcomes or success rates for finding employment (if applicable)?
 - Can you give me an example of someone you have supported recently?
 - Other questions relevant to you!

The information provided in this handout is for reference only. It is not intended as a recommendation or endorsement of specific programs, or as a comprehensive resource list.

This handout is brought to you by Holland Bloorview's Transitions Team
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