



# Advocacy through the Transition Years and Beyond – Genetic Alliance \* P2PUSA Family Voices



Tips I Learned While Supporting My Daughter  
with Down Syndrome to Get Her Two Jobs – one  
at Starbucks and one at Applebee's

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Alexa Atkins at work

# *Start Early*

1. Inclusion – have your child included as much as possible: church, school, neighborhood.
2. Model the importance of working. Talk about it.
3. Have them help around the house.
4. Make sure appropriate – don't hug too much, know how to greet people.
5. See the checklist I used and Patty M. Smith's article.

# Life after high school, ten skills to teach your child

## Life after high school, ten skills to teach your child

Diane Adreon, M.A.

Teaching adaptive behavior is one of the areas that are often overlooked for high-functioning individuals with autism spectrum disorders. However, adaptive behaviors have a tremendous impact on our ability to use our skills in common situations in everyday life.

The following adaptive behavior skills are important if our children are going to experience success without our daily assistance. Of course, every child is different. Often it is not possible to master these skills by the end of high school. However, most of our children can improve and become more independent if we consciously work on skills in these areas.

1. Teach your child to wake up to an alarm clock. It is common for parents to wake their children for school. However, as your child grows older, it's a good idea to teach him to wake up to an alarm clock. You may have to experiment with buzzers, music, and various degrees of volume. Sometimes, for individuals who are particularly hard to wake, you may need to have them walk across the room to turn off the alarm clock. Eventually, this skill would include having the child learn to set the alarm clock. A more advanced skill would involve developing the child's ability to accurately estimate the amount of time needed to get ready and determining to what time the alarm should

by Diane Adreon

Steps to Employment Success

# Middle School

1. Start to think about what kinds of “work” your child might like to do or would be good at – ask your child.
2. Read over Patty McGill Smith’s tips again.
3. Thinking about work, “What is my child good at?” “What do they need to work on so they would be a hard working, appropriate employee?” Continue to have that expectation.
4. Start to look around your community: places you shop, places your child hangs out.
5. Start talking to neighbors and small business owners. See if any of them would think about letting your child work there as a volunteer.

# High School

1. Get your IEP Team talking about transition. Have the expectation that your child will work every summer from age 16 on, even if have to volunteer at first.
2. Work on transition goals at home and at school.
3. Start to talk about where she would want to work, what she would want to do. Alexa did not want to work outside. She does not “like rain on her head”. She would not do any cleaning or landscaping. I did not want her to work in fast food because of my concern about her weight.
4. Alexa cannot do money or time. She cannot do a calendar. She is not a very fast worker. But she is: hard working, friendly, appropriate – clean, “pressed”, never misses a day. Can learn with support, schedule and task management.

# High School (continued)

5. Talk to friends, family, co-workers, church about ideas on where she could work.
6. Alexa worked every summer, just like her sisters did – we found her jobs
  - a. Our offices: filing, making copies, making packets, shredding
  - b. Childcare center where she attended as a toddler: teacher's aide
7. See if can hire or get school Educational Assistants to help support the work during the summer.
8. Start to think about transportation. Ride a bus? Drive a car? Need specialized transportation. Utilize bus travel training programs.

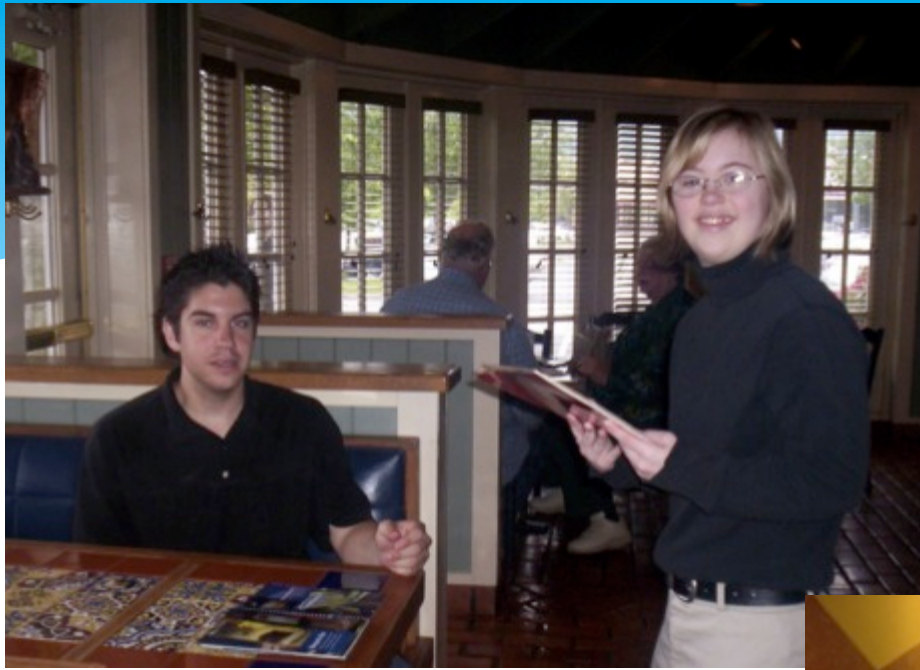
# Transition: 18 - 21

1. By this time, Alexa had worked part time all 3 summers. She had already decided what she wanted to do and what she did not want to do. No childcare, no office work. Wanted to be out with people, interacting. Wanted to be a hostess at a restaurant.
2. Worked with the transition staff to find her a job. She tried out church, library, food bank, Rite Aid, Gene Juarez Hair Salon, Chili's (this was the job she loved – being a hostess).
3. Started interviewing job support agencies to see which would be the best fit and what support staff would work best with Alexa.



# Transition: 18 – 21 (Continued)

4. I knew someone at corporate Starbucks so I sent him an email and just asked the question. Starbucks has hiring people with disabilities in their Mission Statement. Alexa has worked there almost 8 years.
5. One of the biggest challenges for her have been the changes that happen all the time at Starbucks – new managers, people she likes leave. A lot of change, which is hard for her. But we have been working on flexibility, and she is getting much better.



# Questions?

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