



## Introduction to Upbound At Work

October is Disability Awareness Month. Within this newsletter, AAoM would like to highlight the Upbound at Work employment program, showcase an Upbound job seeker, and provide additional information for parents and adults with disabilities.

The mission of Upbound at Work is to improve the economic integration, wealth, and independence of job seekers with disabilities through coordinated advocacy, access to evidence based services and supports, and, ultimately, inclusion in employment. A corollary mission is the correction of the labor market imbalance that leads employers to undercapitalize on available talent by providing them with preemptive training on inclusive recruitment, culture audits, advocacy, and by maintaining a database of job seekers with disabilities that employers can hire from.

If you are interested in joining the employment program or hiring someone with a disability, contact 248.508.8693 and/or [Upbound@aaomi.org](mailto:Upbound@aaomi.org)



## Parent Corner: Strategies For Supporting Your Adult-Child with Career Exploration & Placement

**Kelly Blakeslee MA, CRC** is a Vocational Rehabilitation Manager with Upbound at Work. She works to facilitate successful placement while building a positive neurodiverse work environment for both employee and employer.

Dear Parents,

Whether you're prepared for it or not, your child will grow up! Their eighteenth birthday rolls around and all of a sudden the government considers them an adult requiring them to take on new responsibilities that come along with this age change. The transition years (14-18) may have been used to develop independent living skills and begin career exploration before they exited high school. While school does their best to prepare our young people for transitioning to the workplace, there are often items overlooked or inevitable last minute changes.

This article will focus on post-high school adults with disabilities (18 years old and up), and provide strategies for parents to utilize to facilitate independence with entering the workforce and developing independence with their daily living skills.

### Post-secondary Track:

Once your young adult turns 18 years old, they're considered their own legal guardian. They're required to begin making decisions regarding their medical care, career interests, and personal goals. Should your student decide on college/universities or trade school, they'll realize that IEPs and 504 plans do not transfer.

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Accommodations provided at the college/university level will be different than those provided in high school. Students with disabilities are responsible for completing the same course work, assignments, tests, learning objectives, and policies as other students.

Let's review some strategies parents can utilize to support their student in a post-secondary setting:

**Summary of Performance (SOP):** If you received services in High School, request a SOP document from your school administration.

**Disability service center:** Speak with a disability counselor to understand what services are available and what requirements are needed from the student.

**Career exploration:** Encourage volunteering, shadowing, independent research of career paths (Academic journals, YouTube)

**Align with State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):** The state VR can support with facilitating career exploration while your student is in school, and guide them to any additional resources.

**Internships:** Request support through your school with locating an internship site to develop critical skills and experience. Link back up with your state VR if you think on-the-job support would be helpful.

## Work-Force Ready:

Whether your adult-child is 18 or 30+ years old, it's never too late to support them with building confidence, decision making, critical thinking, and independent living skills. Sometimes the career path chosen isn't appropriate or additional skills need to be developed before proceeding. You'll play a key role in helping them make informed decisions while empowering independent decision making.

## Let's review some strategies:

**Avoid dominating conversations:** Parent input is critical especially when collecting medical history or reviewing IEP documentation. When the conversation turns to career paths and areas of interests, allow the adult to lead these conversations, no matter how slow the dialogue may be! If the adult turns to the parent when asked a question, resist the urge to answer for them. Cue them with either a head nod or hand gesture that they can do this!

**Career decisions:** Career decisions should ultimately be made by the adult, but parent input can be helpful. Allow the child to explore options by engaging in job shadowing, research, and volunteering to see if it appears to be a good fit.

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**Follow-through:** Support your adult with being accountable for follow up on important emails or phone calls. This can be done through phone scripting or proof reading an email.

**Encourage routine:** Having personal routines will support transitioning to a work schedule routine when the time comes. Personal routines can be supported through visual schedules, phone reminders/alarms for appointments (personal or professional), appropriate sleep hygiene, independent medication management, etc.

The above strategies can be used as building blocks as you and your adult-child learn what works best for them. AAoM's MiNavigator program can assist parents with locating parent support groups to network with and learn from others' experiences. Please connect with us for additional information and resources.

## My Personal Journey: Alexandria Seeger

Upbound at Work, Job Candidate



When I was little, I wanted to be a scientist when I grew up – an inventor. Aside from wishing to make this world a better place, the psychology behind it was simple: scientists were smart, respected for their abilities, and took on issues that were quite difficult to solve. Back then, I viewed myself as the dumbest girl in the whole world with nothing to offer. So in my eyes, achieving this admiral dream would redeem me in a sense. That is, I could be viewed as an equal. While the end goal has morphed over the years, the sentiment behind it hasn't.

My journey to employment has been rather tricky so far. In the K-12 school system, I worked tirelessly to achieve good grades. In fact, I had to put in at least twice the effort as everyone else in order to produce those results. But it came at a cost; I can't tell you how many times I grew frustrated to the point of tears while tackling my homework. Things just didn't make sense. I wasn't diagnosed with Asperger's until I was 16 years old, and with ADHD until I was around 24. As a consequence, I had to navigate the world on my own. On the other hand, I gained a valuable skill in independence – learning to figure things out without the help of others.

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During my time at Oakland University, I started to devote some of my energy to internships. Since I decided to study 2 majors – Environmental Science and Japanese (my 2 passions in life), these experiences were varied. On the environmental side, I spent a summer learning about invasive plant species and how to clear them out across various easements.

As for the other major, I dabbled in translating Japanese comics and then later wrote articles for a tourist blog while studying abroad in Japan. Towards graduation, I tried and failed to score positions in the Japanese-related work field. I was able to get some interviews, but my luck ran dry from there. After some deep thought, I decided to go back to school to further supplement my science-related education. That resulted in studying at Lansing Community College for an associate's degree in GIS, otherwise known as geographic information systems.

For the past 2-3 years, I put my all into building up my experience portfolio while still taking classes. First came an 8-month unpaid internship with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Then came a seasonal position with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). And now I currently work with the Department of Transportation (MDOT) as a water quality student assistant that'll end once I graduate. These positions haven't all been smooth sailing. The challenge I found across the board was issues in communication. Sometimes I misinterpret things or have trouble recalling certain details. But as someone who's pretty adaptable, I've found ways to mitigate my weaknesses. This ranges from asking my superiors to be very direct and precise with what they want from me, to recording discussions that I can revisit later if needed. I'm also not afraid to ask questions or clarifications. That way, I'm much less likely to make mistakes. The somewhat difficult part of having these adaptations applied is wording them while still keeping my disabilities a secret. In my experience, telling someone early on means the beginning of the end. Instead of someone saying they need you to do this or that, the dialogue changes to 'CAN you do this'. Essentially, the person doubts your capabilities before they even know you. In order to bypass that prejudice, I pretend to be a neurotypical at all times while proving my worth through the work I put in. Only then after showing what I'm capable of will I possibly take off my mask.

All I want in life is to be a productive and contributing member of society. To me, that means securing a permanent full-time job. Sure, I could take the easy route and spend my days relying on Social Security Disability. But that wouldn't be who I am. I refuse to depend on handouts if I have the ability to work. Besides, that'd be a pretty boring and unfulfilling existence. At this point in my journey, I'm just a step away from my vision, but I need someone to give me a chance. Then I can finally tell that little girl from years ago that she isn't worthless or stupid, but rather intelligent with all the potential in the world at her fingertips.



# EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

## **Job Accommodations Network (JAN):** <https://askjan.org/index.cfm>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. JAN's trusted consultants offer one-on-one guidance on workplace accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation, and self-employment and entrepreneurship options for people with disabilities.

View JAN's Outreach Video: JAN is here for YOU! to learn how JAN works:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR4PZYFM-BQ>.

## **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN):**

<https://askearn.org/> Are you or someone you know looking to hire inclusively?

EARN is a free resource that helps employers tap the benefits of disability diversity by educating public- and private-sector organizations on ways to build inclusive workplace cultures. EARN offers information and resources to empower individuals and organizations to become leaders in the employment and advancement of people with disabilities.

EARN's free webinars and training videos are available through the Dinah Cohen Training Center for Disability Employment & Inclusion at

<https://askearn.org/training-center/>

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### **Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage:**

Have you recognized the value of hiring someone on the spectrum but could not find the right words to explain it? Check-out Getting to Equal, a seminal report by Accenture that concisely summarizes the advantages of hiring individuals with disabilities. From improvements in culture to the hidden talents that improve productivity, this report is a must-read for any inclusive employment advocate.

[https://www.accenture.com/t20181029T185446Z\\_w\\_/us-en/\\_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20181029T185446Z_w_/us-en/_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf)

### **Disability Visibility (edited by Alice Wong):**

A Disability Futures Fellow with the Ford Foundation, Alice Wong has compiled a rich anthology of stories that give the reader a glimpse into the rich complexity of the disabled experience. A celebration and recording of disability culture through first-person accounts, the stories highlight the passions, talents, and everyday lives of those in the community.

To read about Alice Wong's Disability Visibility Project, visit <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/>.

The book is also available on Amazon: <https://amzn.to/35qBKPq>

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## **Upcoming Community Events**

**October 26th:** [Virtual Living with Autism Workshop with Temple Grandin](#)

**October 28th:** [ASK Social Group Halloween Pizza Party](#)

**October 29th:** [The After I'm Gone Program](#)- Department of Health and Human Services

**October 29th:** [BEST PRACTICES IN TELEHEALTH FOR SOCIAL WORKERS](#)

**November 1st:** [FREE Developmental Screening @The Therapy Spot](#)

**November 2nd:** [PLANE \(Physical Literacy and Nutrition Education\) Program at Wayne State University](#)

**November 3rd-25th:** [Disability Network Oakland & Macomb Living Well with a Disability Workshop](#)

**November 5th & 10th:** [Webinar: Do's and Don'ts of Assistance Animals](#)

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**November 5th:** [AAoM's Transition Planning Series | Education Transition Planning from Middle School to High School](#)

**November 5th:** [Webinar: Do's and Don'ts of Assistance Animals](#)

**November 6th:** [The Fowler Center WEEKEND RESPITE CAMPS Adult \(Ages 21+\)](#)

**November 9th:** [Mental Health First Aid](#)

**November 9th:** [Child-Centered Play Therapy](#)

**November 10th:** [AAoM's Transition Planning Series | Employment and Independent Living Transition Planning](#)

**November 10th-12th:** [Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule \(ADOS-2\) Workshop](#)

**November 12th:** [The After I'm Gone Program](#) - Supporting People in Decision Making

**November 12th:** [Rethinking Guardianship – Michigan Alliance for Families](#)

**November 17th:** [MRS Preparing Students for the Future](#)

**November 17th:** [AAoM's Transition Planning Series | Health Care Transition for Youths with Autism](#)

Community partners, add your events to our community calendar here:

<https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/events/community/add/>



## TRANSITION PLANNING SERIES

**Education Transition Planning from Middle School to High School**

Thursday Nov. 5, 2020 | 6pm - 8pm

**Employment and Independent Living Transition Planning**

Tuesday Nov. 10, 2020 | 6pm - 8pm

**Health Care Transition for Youths with Autism**

Tuesday Nov. 17, 2020 | 6pm - 8pm

Register at [aomi.org/conference](https://aomi.org/conference)

