

Education, employment and epilepsy



Living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability does not mean education, training or employment pathways are out of the question.

It is up to the individual to decide whether they feel able to study or work. But some reasonable adjustments may need to be made in education or workplace settings to assist the person fulfil their potential.

Education and employment

When planning for the transition to education, training or employment, it is important to focus on the person's goals and aspirations. There are a wide range of options available, including further education and training, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment.

To assist in planning the person may want to consider work experience, work placements, volunteering and visits to further education and training institutions.

Some people living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability may require additional assistance when studying at University, TAFE, private training organisations or entering into employment. Assistance may be required in the areas of planning, education arrangements, accessibility, assistive technology or other supports.

What does this mean for the person?

Further education and training

Progressing from secondary schooling to further education (TAFE, vocational training and University) is a significant transition period for young people and families. However this transition does not only apply to young people, as people of any age may pursue further education in order to advance existing skills, learn new skills or change career.

**KNOW ME
SUPPORT ME**

Starting further education and training may involve adjusting to a new environment, new learning styles, new forms of assessment, and being surrounded by a wide range of different people. This transition can be particularly daunting for some people who live with epilepsy and a cognitive disability. Consequently some people may require adjustments to accommodate their specific learning needs.

All TAFEs and Universities have dedicated 'Disability Liaison Officers/Disability Support Officers' to assist students with a disability studying in their institution. These staff can assist with the provision of academic support workers (note takers, readers), access to adaptive technology (voice activated software), alternative arrangements for assessment (additional time, scribes), alternative course materials, enrolment and campus orientation, liaison with lecturers and teachers, physical access to facilities, and referral to other support services (counselling, health, housing, finance).

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* clarifies the obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and provides students with a disability the right to education and training opportunities on the same basis as students without a disability. The University of Canberra has developed an informative and practical video for individuals, families and communities which outlines the Disability Standards for Education - <https://resource.dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/>

Employment

Some people may be considering or seeking employment. Employment types may include apprenticeships, traineeships, open employment or supported employment with an Australian Disability Enterprise.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are a way of combining training and employment and can lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Apprenticeships and traineeships can be undertaken by anyone of working age and are available to school-leavers, as well as those re-entering the workforce or wanting a career change.

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) assist people with disabilities to gain training and experience to confidently step into open employment or continue in supported employment. ADEs support people to engage in a wide variety of work tasks including packaging, assembly, production, recycling, screen printing, horticulture, cleaning and laundry services and hospitality.

Open employment refers to working in the open labour market. Depending on the job requirements an applicant may need to have a particular qualification (such as secondary school completion). Some people living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability, particularly those with uncontrolled seizure activity, may be prohibited from working in certain jobs as the risk to the individual, colleagues and/or the community may be too high should a seizure occur.

Epilepsy disclosure

Every person with epilepsy must determine whether they are required to or want to disclose their epilepsy diagnosis to their employer and/or co-workers. To learn more about whether disclosure about epilepsy is required, how to go about it, and the discrimination laws that protect someone who does disclose view the Epilepsy Foundation *Disclosing your epilepsy - to get the job done!* guide.

Employment support

Some people living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability may want assistance finding and sustaining employment. A number of Australian Government programs provide specialist support to individuals and their employers, including:

- **JobAccess** is a free information and advice service about the employment of people with disability. JobAccess provides

information about services, financial assistance and workplace solutions as well as information about reasonable adjustments, disclosure of disability, disability employment case studies, tools and checklists.

- **Disability Employment Services (DES)** assist people with a disability, injury or health condition to look for, find and sustain employment.

What can you do to help?

- Speak to the person about their goals and aspirations to identify areas of interest and what type of study or employment might suit them.
- Visit education and training institutions and arrange to meet with course coordinators and disability support staff.
- Speak to disability career development professionals who can assist with employment planning, volunteering and work experience, and job applications.
- Have an open discussion about workplace epilepsy diagnosis disclosure, taking into account the type of employment and nature of the person's seizure activity.

Where to go for further information:

Epilepsy Foundation www.epilepsyfoundation.org.au

Epilepsy Learning www.learning.epilepsyfoundation.org.au

Australian Apprenticeships www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au

Department of Education and Training www.education.gov.au
(Search: Disability Standards for Education)

Department of Social Services www.dss.gov.au
(Search: Australian Disability Enterprises)

Department of Human Services www.humanservices.gov.au
(Search: Disability employment services)

Job Access www.jobaccess.gov.au

This information sheet is part of a suite of resources that are targeted to family members, carers and support workers, to assist with caring for people living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability.

The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice. Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from an appropriately qualified health professional.

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