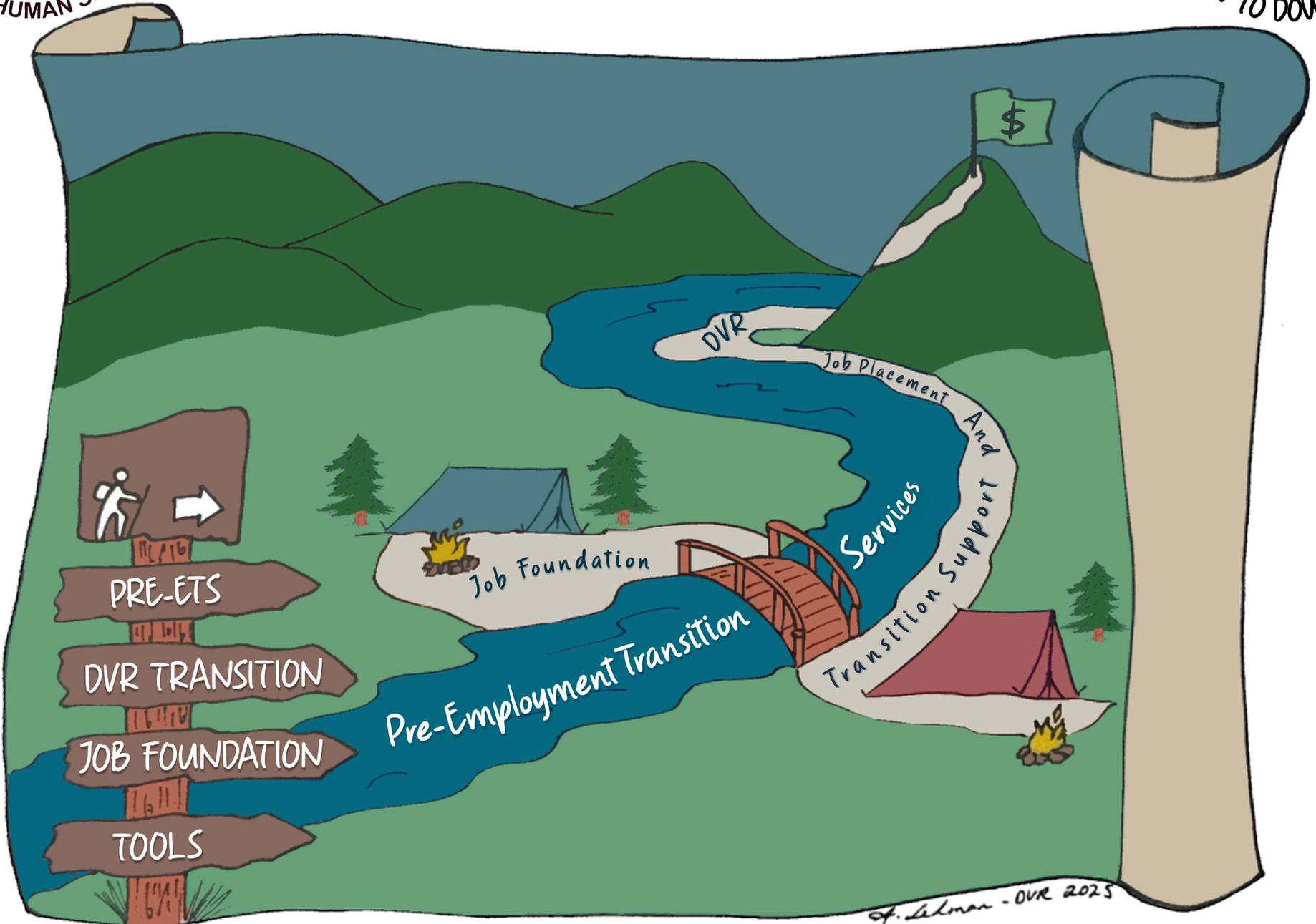
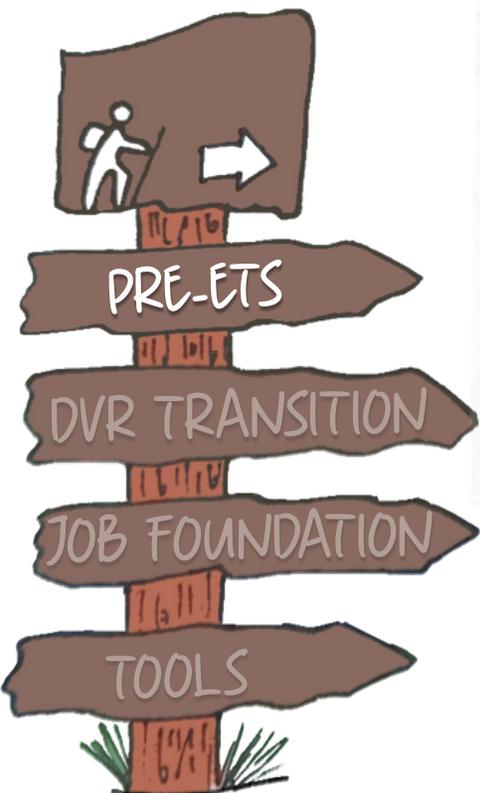




# Cowlitz County Transition Services Guide





**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** - In Washington State, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is for students 14-21 who have a 504, and Individualized Employment Program (IEP), or a medically documented disability. Services are delivered based on need, in coordination with a student's IEP or High School and Beyond Plan vocational goals. Pre-ETS are the first step in helping a student get an early start in job exploration and work readiness. Some students who need more support for employment and independent living after high school might want to apply to DVR so they can work one-on-one with a DVR Counselor.

**The five core components of Pre-Ets include:**

-  **Job Exploration Counseling:** Assisting students in exploring various career options and understanding their interests and abilities
-  **Work-Based Learning Experiences:** Providing opportunities for students to gain real-world work experience through job shadowing, internships, or other hands-on activities.
-  **Workplace Readiness Training:** Teaching students essential skills for employment, such as communication, time management, and appropriate workplace behavior.
-  **Postsecondary Education Counseling:** Guiding students in exploring postsecondary education or training options, including application support and connections to resources.
-  **Self-Advocacy Instruction:** Empowering students to understand and communicate their needs and rights in various settings

**What are Pre-ETS?**

- Activities (not a program) that give students with disabilities an early start at job exploration and work readiness.
- Available to all students with disabilities (not only DDA-eligible), ages 16–21, enrolled in high school.
- Provided in two ways:
  - *Individual:* For DVR caseload students (coordinated by counselor).
  - *Group/General:* For non-DVR students (through Regional Transition Consultants).

Youth Employment Services (YES) program provides Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities, ages 14-21. YES is designed to improve employment outcomes by providing work readiness training, career related learning experiences, and paid internships.

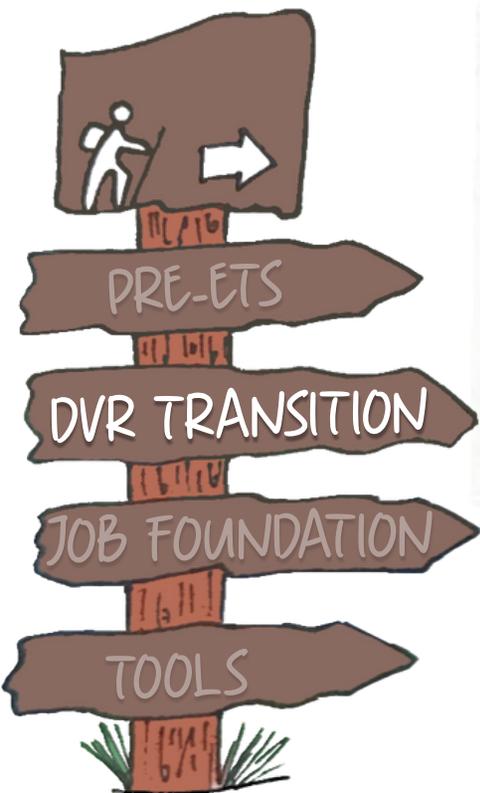


### Who is eligible to receive DVR transition services?

Any student or youth with a disability may be eligible. Transition services are provided to all eligible students and youth with disabilities. This includes students within the special education system, as well as youth within the general education system. Students and youth with disabilities who are transitioning from state and local juvenile rehabilitation institutions and community programs also may be eligible for DVR transition services. Secondary students who receive DVR transition services also have either Individual Education Programs (IEP) or 504 Plans. Other youth with medical or emotional conditions who don't have IEP, or 504 Plans may also qualify for DVR services. Examples of the range of possibilities include but are not limited to students with:

- Mild conditions such as hearing loss, speech impairment, asthma/allergies, physical limitations that preclude them from some activities, emotional or mental health conditions
- Impairments in social interactions
- Learning disabilities
- Cognitive limitations
- Intellectual disabilities
- Students who need reasonable accommodations to participate in classroom and learning activities [a 504 Plan]
- A mental health diagnosis
- Youth that schools identify as high risk who may have disabilities not yet identified
- A physical, mental or sensory impairment resulting in a substantial barrier to employment
- Need DVR services to prepare for, get or keep a job that matches their strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, and interests
- They are capable of working as a result of VR services

There is a presumption of eligibility for DVR services if the student or youth is currently receiving and/or is entitled to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits for disability or blindness and intends to become employed. DVR is required to verify disability status and identify functional limitations. In other words, a person must have a disability that interferes with the ability to work and must need vocational rehabilitation services to obtain or maintain employment. A person is presumed to be able to become employed unless DVR has clear and convincing evidence that the person cannot become employed.



### When do individualized DVR transition services begin?

Typically, DVR counselors begin to work with secondary students and youth who are between the ages of 16-21, although students as young as age 14 can begin to work with DVR if they have a school plan that focuses on post-secondary transition, and they need individualized services as a result of their barriers to employment. Students and youth must be ready and available to actively engage in DVR services. This includes activities necessary to establish an employment goal, develop an employment plan, and participate in vocational rehabilitation services that are required to become employed.

The Federal Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 2014, prohibits DVR from providing or paying for any transition services that are considered to be special education or related services that schools are required to provide. The goal of both schools and DVR is to work together to make sure students are able to become employed after graduation. Students and youth who are interested in post-school employment, and who need specific services to meet their goals, are able to apply for DVR services while still in school. IF a student or youth has a DVR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), these services can continue after graduation until the IPE goals are met.

**Collaboration:** In Cowlitz County, DVR works closely with schools, the Developmental Disabilities Community Services (DDCS), and Cowlitz County Developmental Disabilities Programs to support eligible students and youth with significant cognitive, physical and neurological impairments in making the most of their school years and achieving their employment goals.



## Cowlitz Employment Support Services (CESS)

Cowlitz Employment Support Services (CESS) provides holistic and culturally responsive services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Their programs guide participants toward education, careers, and self-sufficiency in all areas of life.



### Services Provided:

- Career and education guidance
- Job readiness skills (*resume creation, job search assistance, mock interviews*)
- Work clothing and supplies
- Educational supplies
- Transportation support
- Paid and unpaid work experience
- Certification and training opportunities (*including non-accredited programs*)
- Five Feathers Employment Training
- Self-employment guidance
- Wraparound and holistic support services
- Community and tribal referrals

### Eligibility:

#### Enrolled American Indians/Alaska Natives

- Enrolled in a Federally Recognized Tribe or Alaska Native
- Has a physical or mental impairment that creates a barrier to obtaining or maintaining employment
- At least 16 years old
- Resides within Clark or Cowlitz County
- Individual will benefit from CESS services
- Individual requires CESS services to achieve an employment outcome

#### Cowlitz Tribal Members

- Enrolled Cowlitz Tribal member within the United States
- Unemployed or underemployed and seeking employment
- At least 16 years old
- Individual requires CESS services to achieve an employment outcome
- Individual will benefit from CESS services

### For more information about CESS:

**Contact:** Kristie Jenkins, *Administrative Assistant / Intake Specialist*

**Phone:** 360.575.3318

**Email:** [KJenkins@cowlitz.org](mailto:KJenkins@cowlitz.org)

**Website:** [www.Cowlitz.org](http://www.Cowlitz.org)



**Job Foundation** helps students begin early planning for employment and connection to adult service systems.

Students in Job Foundation will work with a Job Coach. The Job Coach will observe the student in school, community and work-based learning settings and gain input from teachers, peers and family to build a customized Job Foundation Report outlining the student's strengths, interests, and support needs.

Students in Job Foundation will experience greater coordination between schools, families, DVR, DDOS and other partners to ensure seamless support and smooth transitions into adult employment and support services.

**Key Benefits:**

- Job Foundation Report. Eligible students will begin working with a Job Coach during the second year of their Transition program. Together, they will explore the student's skills, strengths, interests, and support needs to help increase opportunities for employment after graduation. At the end of the school year, a report and set of action steps will be shared to support the student's continued progress as they plan to work with their Job Coach the following year.
- Expertise and supports. Students will have access to a Job Coach and support, such as assistive technology, or technical assistance, to help create improved job outcomes.
- All students in Job Foundations will receive enhanced coordination between service providers to provide continuity across service systems as the student prepares to exit school.

**What does a Job Foundation Job Coach do?** – during this year, the Job Coach will meet with the student in the classroom, in the community, and at work-based learning sites to gain insights and details about all the things the student can do and wants to do. The Job Coach will work with the student, with input from teachers and family members to develop a report that highlights the student's abilities, interests and goals, and sets action plans in place to build the areas that could use further development.

**The Job Foundation Report focuses on the following areas:**

- Communication skills
- Interactive Social skills
- Self-Advocacy skills
- Critical Documents & Enrollments
- Work Interest Exploration
- Transportation
- Task Management skills

**To be eligible for Job Foundation a student must be:**

- Ages 19-20
- Attending school
- Eligible for DDOS services

# Benefits Planning

## START EARLY!

### When should I start benefits planning?

Benefits planning can begin as early as age 14. Starting early helps you be more informed about and better prepared for how employment may affect benefits such as cash, medical, housing, personal care services, and food benefits.

### Why should I start benefits planning?

Benefits planning can help reduce uncertainty and empower you to work to your full potential, rather than limiting your earnings to keep benefits. It also provides information about Social Security work incentives and other programs that can help pay for items and services needed to maintain employment..

## WHY IT MATTERS

## NEED HELP?

### How do I connect with a benefits specialist?

A benefits specialist can guide you in developing a personalized plan as you transition to employment. You can connect with a specialist through:

- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR):** If already enrolled, you can request benefits planning through your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.
- **Developmental Disabilities Community Services (DDCS, formerly DDA):** If already enrolled with DDCS, you can enroll with **BenefitU**, an online resource for information, tools, and tips about different benefits programs. You can request to work with a benefits specialist to develop your own personalized plan - they will show you how to use the tools and resources available. **Visit:** [www.BenefitU.org](http://www.BenefitU.org)
- **Arc of Cowlitz County:** Request information and assistance to connect to Benefits Planning resources.



# Benefits Planning Comparison - DDETF vs. ABLE Savings

## ABLE

### What is the Washington State ABLE Savings Plan (ABLE)?

- See also: [RCW 43.330.460](#)
- Saves for everyday needs in a tax-free account without losing state or federal benefits.
- Easy to open and manage.
- Individuals can contribute directly or via payroll through ABLE to Work.
- Friends and family can also contribute.
- Empowers individuals to save for qualified expenses and invest in their future.

## DDETF

### What is the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Endowment Trust Fund (DDETF)?

See also: [RCW 43.330.431](#)

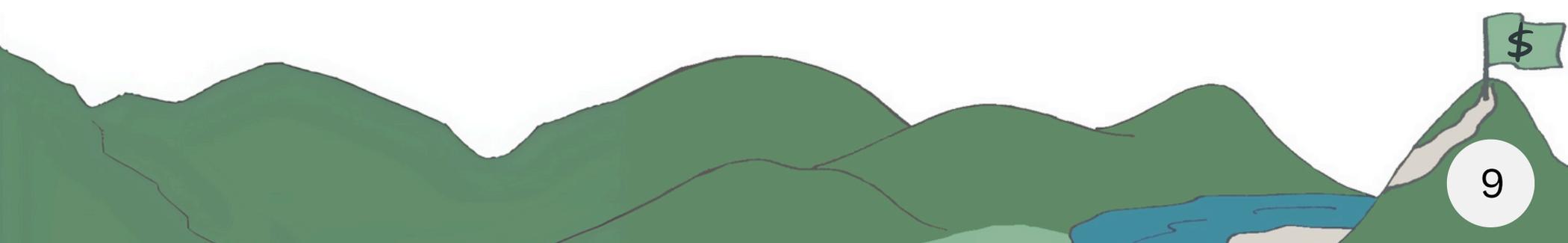
Helps individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities invest for the future while maintaining eligibility for government benefits.

Use the chart on the following page as an overview of the most frequently asked questions related to these two resources.



# Comparison - DDETF vs. ABLE Savings

Feature	WA State DDETF	WA State ABLE Savings Plan
<b>Purpose</b>	A special needs trust that excludes its assets from federal means-tested benefits for all contributors	A tax-advantaged savings plan that excludes its assets from federal means-tested benefit programs for smaller & medium contributors
<b>Who is it for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WA resident under age 65 with a developmental disability, determined eligible for state DDCCS services</li> <li>• Condition happened before age 18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WA resident eligible for SSI or SSDI or can document a qualifying diagnosis from a licensed physician</li> <li>• Condition happened before age 26</li> </ul>
<b>What is it?</b>	Special Needs Trust – exempted funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Trust 1 - Third Party</b> (mom &amp; dad)</li> <li>• <b>Trust 2 - Self-Settled</b> (beneficiary)</li> </ul>	529A savings plan – exempted funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax-advantaged savings account.</li> <li>• Regardless of the source money for the contribution, account is considered 1<sup>st</sup> party money (beneficiary)</li> </ul>
<b>Ownership</b>	Assets belong to the trust account holder and must be used in interest of the beneficiary	Assets belong to the account owner (beneficiary) and must be used in the interest of the beneficiary
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds are exempt from SSI, Medicaid, SNAP and HUD</li> <li>• Funds do not count towards the \$2,000 resources limit</li> <li>• Funds usually do not count towards the \$3,000 limit on money in a guardianship without bond or block</li> <li>• \$5 million original endowment and its market earnings pays for the program fee matches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds are exempt from SSI, Medicaid, SNAP, and HUD</li> <li>• Funds do not count towards the \$2,000 resources limit</li> </ul>
<b>Why select one?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiary not competent to spend the money wisely or appropriately</li> <li>• Testimonial trust to transfer wealth to younger generations</li> <li>• Trust managers ensure money only goes for legally intended uses</li> <li>• Provide resources that benefit the beneficiary</li> <li>• Maintain a large balance while shifting funds to an ABLE account for more flexible spending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiary may or may not be competent to spend the money</li> <li>• Broader eligibility</li> <li>• Beneficiary or authorized legal guardian retains control over the funds (but also has greater responsibility to stick to intended uses of money)</li> <li>• Cheaper and more flexible than a special needs trust</li> </ul>
<b>Fees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment fee of \$600</li> <li>• Annual asset management fee \$75-\$750</li> <li>• Annual \$75 tax prep fee</li> <li>• Some fees are currently offset by state match</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual fee of \$35</li> <li>• Annual investment fee of 0.30% - 0.38% on assets</li> <li>• Mailing fees and others may apply</li> </ul>



# Comparison - DDETF vs. ABLE Savings

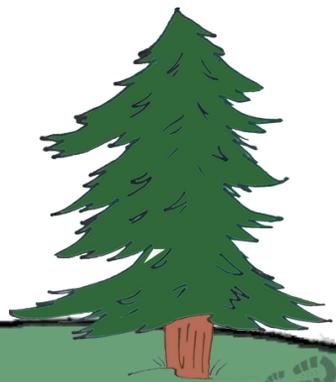
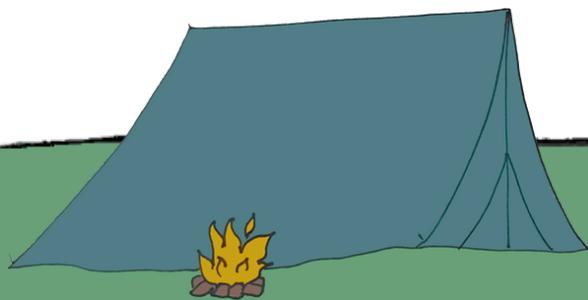
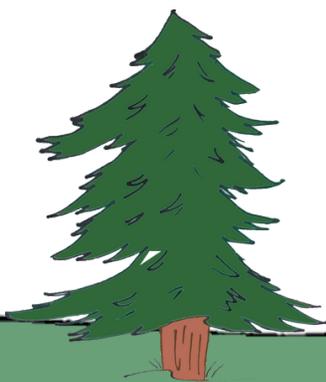
Feature	WA State DDETF	WA State ABLE Savings Plan
<b>Contribution &amp; Spending Limits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No limits on contributions</li> <li>No limits on spending, except room &amp; board for those on SSI</li> <li>Does not affect SSI or Medicaid eligibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlimited number of contributions but capped at \$19,000/year unless employed*</li> <li>\$500,000 lifetime balance limit</li> <li>First \$100,000 does not affect SSI eligibility</li> </ul> <p>* <i>ABLE to Work allows eligible beneficiaries who are employed to contribute an amount equal to their current year's gross income (up to a max of \$15,060) in addition to the \$19,000 annual limit.</i></p>
<b>Spending Uses</b>	Transportation, education, assistive technology, employment training, personal support services, legal fees, funeral & burial ( <i>prepaid only</i> ), health & wellness ( <i>vacations, entertainment</i> ), financial management	Basic living expenses, housing ( <i>rent, down payment, renovations</i> ), transportation, education, assistive technology, employment training, personal support services, legal fees, funeral & burial, health & wellness, financial management
<b>Transfers Between Accounts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can transfer funds as a contribution from DDETF to ABLE</li> <li>Cannot transfer funds from ABLE → DDETF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can transfer funds as a contribution from DDETF to ABLE</li> <li>Cannot transfer funds from ABLE → DDETF</li> </ul>
<b>Decision Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary representatives like parents, guardians and rep payees submit reimbursement requests to the trust manager</li> <li>The trust manager determines what the money can be spent on to avoid ineligible items or services that violate SSA regulations or the joinder agreement provisions</li> <li>The trust manager mails reimbursement checks to vendors and primary representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The beneficiary and/or their authorized legal representative</li> <li>Account owners owe taxes and penalties for items and services purchased that are not qualified disabilities expenditures</li> <li>Non-qualified disabilities expenditures may jeopardize SSA and other public benefits</li> </ul>
<b>After Beneficiary Passes Away</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trust 1 Third Party: no pay back required; remainder of assets distributed according to Trust documents</li> <li>Trust 2 self-settled: Medicaid/Medical Assistance Recovery before distribution of assets according to Trust documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assets transferred to beneficiary's estate and can pay outstanding ABLE eligible expenses</li> <li>Medicaid/Medical Assistance Recovery (<i>regardless of contributor</i>) is paid before distribution of assets to remainder beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<b>How to Enroll</b>	<p><b>DDETF Trust Office</b>            1.888.754.8798 and ETFinfo@arcwa.org  <a href="http://ddetf.wa.gov">http://ddetf.wa.gov</a></p>	<p><b>ABLE Call Center</b>            1.844.600.2253 - TTY and Chat available  <a href="http://www.WashingtonStateABLE.com">www.WashingtonStateABLE.com</a></p>



# Transition Resources & Key Contacts

<p><b>The Arc of Cowlitz County</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.644.6844  <b>Contact:</b> Angie Whitcraft  <b>Email:</b> AWhitcraft@LifeWorksWA.org</p>	<p><b>Division of Vocational Rehabilitation</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.916.1471  <b>Contact:</b> Josh Ipock  <b>Email:</b> Joshua.ipok@dshs.wa.gov</p>	<p><b>Employers Overload</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.200.6754  <b>Contact:</b> Rosmary Boyles  <b>Email:</b> rosemary@employersoverload.com</p>
<p><b>Compass Career Solutions</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.619.6029  <b>Contact:</b> Karyn Foster  <b>Email:</b> KFoster@Careersbycompass.com</p>	<p><b>Farm Dog Bakery</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.644.6871  <b>Contact:</b> Stacey Lovell  <b>Email:</b> staceylovell@lifeworkswa.org</p>	<p><b>River Cities Transit</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.442.5662  <b>Contact:</b> Doreen Daggett  <b>Email:</b> Doreen@rcrtransit.org</p>
<p><b>Cowlitz County Transition</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.414.5599  <b>Contact:</b> Sue Saxton  <b>Email:</b> saxtons@cowlitzwa.gov</p>	<p><b>Goodwill</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 253.573.6629  <b>Contact:</b> Johanna Hudson  <b>Email:</b> JohanaH@goodwillwa.org</p>	<p><b>STEPS</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.355.3118  <b>Contact:</b> Jeanette Forman  <b>Email:</b> jeanette.forman@esd112.org</p>
<p><b>Cowlitz Employment Support Services (CESS)</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.575.3318  <b>Contact:</b> Kristie Jenkins  <b>Email:</b> KJenkins@cowlitz.org</p>	<p><b>Life Works Vocational Services</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.644.6898  <b>Contact:</b> Jamie Davis  <b>Email:</b> JamieDavis@lifeworkswa.org</p>	<p><b>LPS 18-21 Transition Academy</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 503.201.3115  <b>Contact:</b> Garrett Chong  <b>Email:</b> gchong@longview.k12.wa.us</p>
<p><b>Developmental Disabilities Community Services</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.265.5092  <b>Contact:</b> Jim Tucker  <b>Email:</b> james.tucker@dshs.wa.gov</p>	<p><b>Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)</b>  <b>Name:</b> Selena Cunningham  <b>Phone:</b> 360.916.6341  <b>Email:</b> Selena.Cunningham@dshs.wa.gov</p>	<p><b>Youth Employment Services (YES)</b>  <b>Phone:</b> 360.355.3119  <b>Contact:</b> Christine Katon  <b>Email:</b> Christine.katon@esd112.org</p>

**Developmental Disabilities Endowment Trust Fund**  
**Phone:** 360.705.9514 ext.5  
**Contact:** Melissa Foster  
**Email:** melissa@arcwa.org



# The Transition Trail: Steps by Age

## Begin Early Transition Planning

14-15 yrs



**Why:** Starting early gives students a chance to explore interests and build skills while receiving full support from their school team, creating a strong foundation for education and employment after graduation.

## Apply with Developmental Disabilities Community Services (DDCS)

14-16 yrs



**Why:** Connecting early with DDCS helps students access vital support services and community programs, while allowing time to establish eligibility for adult services. Supports may include case management, family assistance, and other resources to build independence, with long-term employment support available after age 21.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

14-21 yrs



**Why:** Pre-ETS helps students with disabilities (ages 14–21) prepare for life after high school by exploring careers, building job skills, and developing self-advocacy. Services focus on career readiness through job exploration, workplace training, and postsecondary planning—providing an early start on work and further education.

## Apply for a Washington State ID Card (before 18 is easier)

15-16 yrs



**Why:** A photo ID is required to apply for many adult services, and obtaining one before age 18 is often easier.

**Find a Nearby WA State Dept. of Licensing Office:** <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/dsdoffices/>

## Guardianship: Consider Legal Decision Making Options

17-17½ yrs



**Why:** At age 18, your student becomes a legal adult and may need support making legal, financial, medical, and vocational decisions. Planning ahead ensures the right supports are in place to help your student make these important decisions safely and successfully.

**Learn more: Contact the Arc of Cowlitz County, or visit:** [www.washingtonlawhelp.org/supported-decision-making](http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/supported-decision-making)

## Apply for HUD Housing

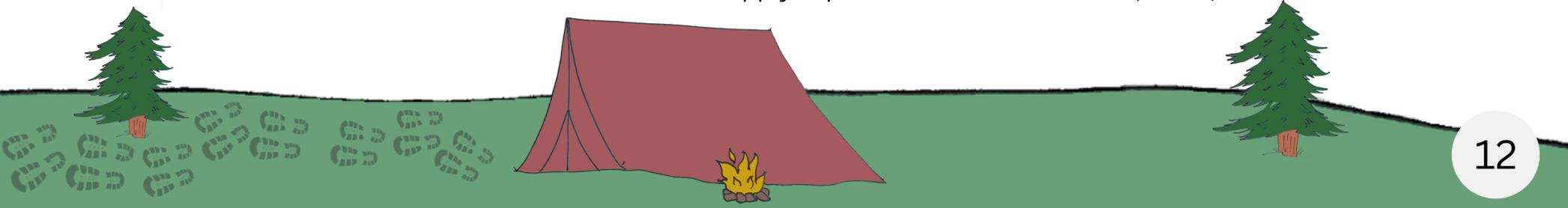
17-19 yrs



**Why:** Planning for future housing needs takes time and preparation. Early planning improves access to housing options and helps build the skills needed for successful independent or supported living. Because waitlists can be long, it's important to apply early.

- **All Cowlitz County residents** (except Kelso & Kalama): Apply online at [www.hoswwa.org](http://www.hoswwa.org)

**Kelso & Kalama residents:** Call 360-423-3490 or apply in person at 1415 S. 10th Ave., Kelso, WA 98626



# The Transition Trail: Steps by Age, cont'd

18 yrs



## Apply for Social Security Benefits (if not already receiving)

**Why:** At age 18, your child may qualify for their own Social Security benefits, since only their income counts. They may receive cash and Medicaid benefits to help with living costs. Work Incentives allow people with disabilities to keep benefits while working, and paying rent to the family can help maximize Social Security payments.

18 yrs



## Personal Care Funding – Ask Your DDCS Case Manager

**Why:** If your student needs help with bathing, grooming, dressing, laundry, or other daily activities, funding may be available through the “Community First Choice” (CFC) Program. Support can be provided by family members or a contracted provider. Applying now helps determine how this and other services can benefit your family.

18 yrs



## Open a Bank Account

**Why:** At age 18, your student will begin earning and managing their own money, making it important to have a personal bank account.

18-19 yrs



## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) – Apply

**Why:** DVR helps people with disabilities find and maintain employment, while also understanding how work may affect benefits.

19-20 yrs



## Job Foundation Program – Apply

**Why:** Connects students in their second year of post-high school Transition with a Job Coach to take steps toward employment and adult life. Students must be DDCS eligible. Talk with your teacher or apply online at:

[www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/transition](http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/transition)

Anytime



## Transportation Training

**Why:** Learning to use public transportation expands opportunities for employment, social activities, and community involvement while building essential life skills. Flexible alternative transportation is available for people with disabilities. Ask about travel training and reduced fares.

Anytime



## Connect with The Arc of Cowlitz County

**Why:** The Arc helps navigate service systems, connects individuals and families to resources, and provides support and education for people with disabilities.

