

1. **Do your homework before calling BRS.** The BRS website <http://www.ct.gov/brs> has a wealth of helpful information about its services. Website topics include, but are not limited to, eligibility, school to work transition, and frequently asked questions.
2. **You can apply for school to work transition services as young as 14 years of age.**
Do not let BRS tell you they are an adult service system and that they do not get involved until the student is a senior in high school. By that time, many opportunities may have been lost! BRS can attend Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings and get to know the student's abilities, skills and interests. BRS can work in collaboration with your school's transition coordinator. Refer to BRS' Transition Planning booklet, available on the BRS website, for more information.
3. **Young Adults May Be Eligible for the Level Up Program.** Level Up! is designed for students 16 to 21 years of age, who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504 Plan or challenges with gaining independence and work competitively in their communities. Services provided by a Level Up Counselor are job shadowing, resume writing, interviewing skills and other transition services. For more information, visit:
http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/dors_level_up_2016.pdf
4. **Don't let BRS tell you they won't provide services because you are already receiving them from another agency!** Both the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services provide vocational services. Even if you are receiving services from one of these agencies, you can still apply for assistance from BRS.
5. **Do not be afraid to think outside the box when exploring employment opportunities.** Don't let BRS talk you into their typical employment options such as lawn maintenance or grocery store clerk if that type of employment does not interest you. If you are interested in a specific career, let BRS know. If you are not sure about a career, ask BRS to help you explore your employment interests. Also, if you don't understand, ask questions!
6. **Remember, it's an INDIVIDUAL Plan for Employment (IPE).** The IPE is the single most important document to help you obtain employment through BRS. Your IPE should be written to specifically reflect your skills and employment goals because it will dictate the funding and the services that BRS will provide. BRS can offer you a wide range of employment opportunities including a working interview or a job evaluation. In a working interview, BRS places you with an employer, hoping that the employer will hire you upon completion of the working interview. In a working evaluation, BRS assesses your skills to determine your eligibility or your ability to obtain your employment goals.

7. **You can have an IEP and an IPE.** The IEP is an Individual Education Plan that is developed by the student and their high school team. A component of the IEP is a transition plan. The school is responsible to implement the transition plan in the IEP. You may also apply for BRS services and also have an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). BRS is responsible for implementing the IPE which may come later in the transition process. The IEP and IPE should work together to assist with finding competitive employment including training or further education.
8. **If you need support – bring it.** You can always bring someone who can take notes, be a second set of ears or who has experience and can assist you with navigating the BRS system. If you notify BRS ahead of time, you can also bring a tape recorder to the meeting and record it.
9. **Be sure to have evaluations conducted in a functional, natural environment.** You want an honest evaluation of your skills. You will only get that if you are in an environment that is typical for that work. For example, you don't want a work evaluation in a beauty salon if you want to work as a social worker. It is important to know that the evaluator will be observing you during an evaluation and developing a report for BRS based on concerns that BRS has about your ability to work. Be careful - the report should not be the only factor in determining eligibility or the possibility of obtaining certain employment goals.
10. **Make sure the BRS counselor gets to know who you are.** Talk to them about your life experiences and let them get to know the whole you. The more the counselor knows about your paid and unpaid work experience and any volunteer activities, the better your chance of being eligible for services. But, don't let BRS tell you that before they can provide services that you need to volunteer for a couple of years and build a work history.
11. **Don't forget about the Client Assistance Program (CAP)** - If you have questions or are experiencing difficulty with obtaining BRS eligibility or services, contact Disability Rights Connecticut, Client Assistance Program (CAP).



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