

MEET JOHN

Pre-Reading Questions

- *To what extent should independent living skills be taught to students approaching adulthood?*
- *What are some unique considerations for preparing students with physical disabilities for adulthood?*

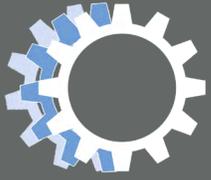
John is a 14-year-old with cerebral palsy. He is learning to use a high-technology device for communication and he reads at a third grade level. John receives the majority of his instruction in the special education classroom and is on track to earn a special education diploma. John's postsecondary independent living goal is to live in supported residential housing. Given that John will have support staff to assist him after high school, his teacher decides not to provide direct instruction on independent living skills. Instead, she has John focus his efforts on his transition activity of making phone calls to potential supported living communities and post-secondary education programs.

What's the Problem?

Although John's goal is to live in supported residential housing, such options may not be available when he graduates. Instruction on independent living skills will help John to be as independent as possible in terms of self-care. This will allow John to be able to care for himself if his living situation provides less support than the housing options to which he is applying. Furthermore, independence fosters a sense of dignity and self-confidence which are important factors related to quality of life. In addition, the ability to carry out activities of daily living independently would allow John to have more opportunities for involvement in post-secondary education and employment.

What's the Solution?

During a phone call with a post-secondary education program, the staff member expressed concerns about John's ability to take care of himself. He said that, typically, the students that are accepted can feed themselves and independently use a public restroom. John feels disappointed because he currently needs help carrying out both of those tasks. John talks to his teacher about the problem. She suggests that they get assistive technology (AT) consultation services for him. During elementary school, John had AT consultation. However, once he began middle school, he no longer received this consultation. His teacher asked permission from John and his parents to invite the AT specialist to the upcoming IEP meeting in a few weeks. They all agreed; they even expressed excitement about learning new strategies from the AT specialist. The strategies suggested by the AT



Transition

T E N N E S S E E

specialist were implemented and John began to gradually improve his independence in completing activities of daily living skills with her. She continues to monitor his progress.

Post-Reading Questions

- *What strategies have you used to promote the independent living skills of students?*
- *Have you worked with an assistive technology specialist before? What did you learn from the experience?*
- *What are some other ways that improved independent living skills would benefit a student?*