



## How can I Help my Child Experience Careers?

While your child is in middle and high school, he or she can participate in many career exploration activities. These activities may include:

**Informational interviewing.** Encourage your child to call people who work in his or her chosen career. Your child should let each person know the purpose of the call and determine how much time the individual has to talk. Important questions to ask include:

- What daily activities do you do on your job?
- How did you decide to choose this career?
- What kind of training did you need to enter this career?
- What do you like most about your work?
- What do you like least about your work?

**Career fairs.** Take every opportunity to attend career fairs with your child so he or she has the chance to learn more about various careers. Career fairs are often offered in high schools, local colleges or by the local chamber of commerce.

**Job shadow experiences.** The more your child sees people in the work environment, the more informed he or she will be about possible careers. Check to see if programs such as "Take your Child to Work Day" exist in your community.

**Internships and work-based learning.** These programs sometimes allow your child to gain high school credit while exploring his or her career interest area. Internships and work-based learning may be paid or unpaid experiences.

**Volunteer work.** Encourage your child to volunteer for a business or organization that provides jobs in his or her career interest area.

**Vocational classes.** If your child's high school offers vocational classes in an area that interests him or her, encourage your child to take those classes to get hands-on experience with the tools and skills used in the career area.

**Field trips.** Field trips are another way for your child to see workers in many different careers. Before your child goes on a school field trip, ask him or her to watch for different types of workers and careers while on the field trip. Then discuss those careers with your child afterwards. You may also arrange a field trip, just for you and your child, to a business or organization that employs people in your child's chosen career.

Remember that career choice is a personal decision. Do not try to steer your child to a particular career because you think it is something you might like.

Your child may change his or her career interest as a result of increased exposure to careers. Continue to encourage your child as career choices change - the more informed he or she is about careers, the better his or her career decision will be.

### For more information:

The following resources provide you and your child with important information regarding career decision-making:

U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook. Find it at your local library or online at: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>.

Your state's Career Resource Network Office will have career information and more information about the career decision-making process. To find your state's Career Resource Network Office, go to: <http://www.acrnetwork.org> and click on "Network."

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O\*Net) can be found online at: <http://online.onetcenter.org/> and click on "Skills Search."

America's Career InfoNet, created by a federal/state partnership coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor can be found online at: <http://www.acinet.org/acinet/default.asp>.



America's Career Resource Network

# Help Your Child Make Career Decisions

A parent's guide to Career Decision-Making for Middle School and High School-Aged Students. . .



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## Why is my Help Important?

Great careers do not simply happen. That is why it is important for your child to make career plans. You are the best person to ensure that your child is making wise career choices.

- Research shows that parents have the greatest influence on their children's career choices.
- As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else does.
- You have more interest in helping your child choose a rewarding career than anyone else.
- Your child's future is too important to be left to "luck" or "chance."

Here are some important notes about your child's career decision-making process:

- Because of your child's limited knowledge about career opportunities, he or she needs guidance to choose the best educational and career path.
- Your child should explore many different careers and think about what he or she likes and dislikes about each one before focusing on a career.
- It is important to have a career plan in place before investing time, energy and money in college.



## How do I Help my Child make Career Plans?

Be an active partner with your child as he or she takes each of these steps. Help your child:

### **Figure out his or her likes and dislikes and what is important to him or her.**

Choosing the right career requires that your child understand his or her interests, personality, skills and values. There are a variety of assessment instruments that career counselors use to help students identify their interests. You can also help your child think about his or her interests, personality, skills and values by discussing the things he or she likes and dislikes and how those preferences relate to career choices. For more information on interest assessments, see the "Helping your Child Identify Interests" section of the Parent's Guide at: <http://www.acrnetwork.org/parentsguide/>.

### **Learn about careers.**

It is important for your child to have as much information as possible about his or her career interests. Many career decisions are made with limited information, and this can result in wrong career choices. Help your child gather written information about his or her career interests, talk with people who work in the career, and experience work in his or her chosen career. See the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O\*Net) at: <http://online.onetcenter.org/>. Click on "Skills Search."

### **Set primary and secondary goals.**

Your child may have a dream career in mind, but he or she should explore alternative goals as well. For example, if your child's primary career goal is to be a professional athlete, he or she should also consider other goals in the sports field such as sports medicine, sports promotion, coaching or physical education. It is always wise to have alternative goals.

### **Create and follow a plan.**

Help your child create an educational plan to reach his or her career goal. This includes carefully choosing courses to take in high school. Make sure that your child is well prepared for college or other post-high school training.



## What Information does my Child need about Careers?

In order for your child to be well informed about his or her career choice, you should help your child gather information that will help him or her decide if the career choice matches personal interests, skills and values. Here are some questions that should be explored:

- What will I do in a typical workday?
- What preparation/education do I need?
- Where can I get training for this career?
- Will there be jobs available in the future, when I complete my training?
- How much does this job pay? An exercise in budgeting can help your child decide if he or she will be able to maintain the lifestyle of his or her choice on the expected salary.
- What knowledge and skills are used in this work?
- Are these knowledge and skill areas in which I am already strong, or will I need additional development? How do I get that development?
- What are the opportunities for advancement in this career?
- Is the work environment (indoors/outdoors, office/factory, groups/alone) one in which I work best?
- Does the work require physical activity, and am I willing and able to perform at the level required?