

Empowering Students with ABLE Accounts: A Guide for IEP Teams

What is an ABLE Account?

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts for people with disabilities. They allow saving for disability-related expenses over and above the current \$2,000 asset limit without jeopardizing eligibility for important needs-based benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. These accounts are a powerful financial tool for fostering independence and empowering disabled individuals to save and plan for their futures.

Why Consider an ABLE Account for Students?

Flexible Use: Funds from ABLE accounts can be used for expenses that help improve the health, independence and/or quality of life of the person with a disability and include education, housing, assistive technology, personal support services, transportation, healthcare costs and more.

Encourages Financial Literacy: Introducing students and their families to the concept of ABLE accounts during the IEP process can support the development of financial skills and awareness, especially as students approach transition planning. The ABLE prepaid card is a great tool for students to learn about spending money as it is reloadable with funds from the ABLE account and options are available to set limits and customize what can be purchased with it.

Getting Started with ABLE Accounts

Individuals are eligible if their disability began before age 26 and the severity of their disability meets the disability requirements for SSI or SSDI (the age of onset for disability will be raised to 46 starting January 1, 2026). ABLE Accounts are managed by state programs, and Oregon's plan is the Oregon ABLE Savings Plan implemented by the Oregon State Treasury. Oregon ABLE provides support materials as well such as:

- An [ABLE enrollment video link](#) letting people know what they will need to have to open an ABLE account
- An FAQ sheet that can be used by staff as a guide to help explain key features of ABLE when talking with disabled students/family members about the program
- A generic newsletter piece that can be used by your organization to promote ABLE to the community members you work with

ABLE Accounts are a valuable tool that supports the autonomy, financial security, and long-term planning of students experiencing disabilities. By incorporating these accounts into IEP transition planning, teams can help students and families envision and work towards a future of greater independence and opportunity.

The Oregon ABLE Savings Plan is brought to you by the Oregon State Treasury. For more information, visit www.oregonABLEsavings.com. If you would like to schedule an informational presentation, and/or receive supportive materials please contact John Valley at: john.valley@ost.state.or.us.

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Connection Between ABLE Accounts and Secondary Transition Planning

Supporting Transition Goals: ABLE accounts can support transition planning by helping students save for vocational training, college, or independent living. For students considering post-secondary education or independent living, ABLE accounts can provide necessary financial support.

Empowering Students Transitioning to Adulthood: Encouraging students to be involved in decisions about ABLE accounts helps foster self-determination. This can be a meaningful step toward students learning how to make financial decisions that align with their life aspirations.

Below are touchpoints during the school year for IEP Teams to consider when ABLE information could be introduced to families/students and how ABLE information may be shared:

- **Integrate into Transition Discussions:** IEP teams can introduce ABLE accounts during transition planning meetings, discussing how these accounts could support a student's vision for their future.
- **Empower Students Nearing 18 Years of Age:** Highlight for students that ABLE accounts can be a steppingstone toward greater financial autonomy, enhancing their capacity for independent living. Having an ABLE account eliminates the "spending down" issues many students face when trying to work and pay for living expenses without losing their disability benefits by going over the \$2,000 asset limit.
- **Collaborate with Families:** Engage families by sharing information on ABLE accounts, emphasizing their potential for providing financial security while safeguarding access to other essential benefits.

Here is a sample script members of an IEP team can use and/or modify when introducing ABLE to special education families:

"As we are planning for [Student]'s future, we want to make sure you have all the resources that can help them achieve their goals and dreams. Have you heard about ABLE accounts?"

ABLE accounts are special savings accounts that were specifically designed for disabled individuals that receive disability benefits like SSI and Medicaid. As you may know, these benefit programs have an asset limit of \$2,000. If a disabled person has more than \$2,000 in assets they will lose their benefits, unless that money is in an ABLE account.

ABLE accounts allow you to save money for things like education, job training, housing, or other important needs without affecting a disabled person's eligibility for benefits. We thought this might be a helpful tool to support [Student]'s journey toward greater independence and success. If you are interested, we can provide more information or point you toward resources that explain how ABLE accounts work."