



### **The Teen Years: Successful Transitions from Adolescence to Young Adulthood**

For most teens in our society, the transition from secondary school to work or college begins during their sophomore or junior year in high school. The years from 15–19 are important as teens anticipate what they will be doing after high school, prepare, and make the transition. Although many teens hope to attend college, others will choose job training or go directly to work. However, the constantly changing work environment and the increasing demands for more education can make choices confusing. The last two years of high school can be a stressful time for parents and teens.

There is growing awareness of the critical importance of teens' successful transition from secondary school and the risk of violence if the transition is not successful. Data suggest that young people between the ages of 17 and 25 are vulnerable to violence and criminal activity. However, the evidence also suggests that young people who can establish a healthy structure for their lives, including a stable work and family life, tend to stay out of trouble or end their previous involvement in delinquent activity.

Here are some ways that you play a crucial role in helping your teen with this important transition to adulthood:

- *Providing your teen with access to career and employment counseling.* You can encourage your teen to meet with school counselors or community college counselors to explore career options, education or training requirements, job availability, and salary expectations.
- *Encouraging your teen to take part in internships or other career-related exploratory experience.* Teens who have a part-time job or internship often report having an enhanced self-image and better understanding of the skills required for the workplace.
- *Helping your teen investigate college options early.* Your teen can narrow her college search and then visit with college advisors or faculty in your teen's area of interest. This will help her focus on achievable goals during her last two years of school and ease her transition to college.
- *Understanding that your teen's transition to adulthood is a process.* Turning 18 doesn't immediately make a young person capable of handling all aspects of adult life. Understanding that the process is gradual and that young adults still need considerable guidance and support from others will likely make the transition less frustrating for everyone.

If you are concerned about your child's transition from high school, you can talk with other parents, school counselors, college advisors, and professionals employed in your teen's area of interest.

*The information contained in this summary is taken from the Teen Years chapter of the Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents by Peggy Patten and Anne S. Robertson (Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 2001).*

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