

Transition Planning

Your Child's Journey into Adulthood

Planning ahead is the key to ensuring that high school serves as a supportive catalyst into a teenager's future. Young adults are more likely to be more successful and satisfied if they are involved in realistic planning. **Transition planning** involves parents/guardians, providers, schools, state agencies, insurance, service agencies, and most importantly, the transitioning adult. **Organization, communication and empowerment** of the transitioning individual are all vital to ensuring positive outcomes.

Important Things to Consider

- **Make sure your child's disability is documented** in order to ensure eligibility for services.
 - Encourage/teach your child to **independently function as much as possible**, to understand their skills/interests.
 - Continuously **assess your child's ability** to assume responsibility for medical, educational, social and financial decision making. Guardianship may need to be considered.
 - **Use scaffolding** to build skills incrementally while involving your child in decision making that is appropriate for them. **Give your child choices** and empower him/her to make healthy decisions.
 - Continue to **engage in open dialogue** about potentially needing to transfer to adult care providers.
 - **Discuss interests and realistic opportunities** for employment, college and more with your child over time.
 - **Don't be afraid to ask for help** when you need it! Your medical providers, social workers, educators, services agencies and resource specialists are all dedicated to ensuring that your child is cared for and is able to successfully transition into adulthood.
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14 Years Old

- **Read through general transition planning resource guides.** These offer helpful information regarding all topics related to transition.
 - Federation for Children with Special Needs' & Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's "*A Family Guide to Transition Services in Massachusetts*":
<http://fcsn.org/transition-guide>
 - Department of Developmental Services' "*Important Information Every Family Should Know*":
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/transition-planning-road-forward.rtf>
 - Autism Consortium's "*Transitioning Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders*":
<http://www.autismconsortium.org/families/transitioning-to-adulthood>
- Create a **Vision Statement & Letter of Intent (LOI)** that can be shared with the PCP, school and other providers. This is a personal plan that helps to organize and guide decisions / options related to transition planning.
- **Request a team meeting with the school to develop a Transition Plan (TP).** This meeting is separate from a standard IEP meeting and will result in the development of a Statement of Needed Transition Services. **Regular IEP meetings will typically spend only 10 minutes on this subject.**
- **Attend IEP Transition meeting** to develop goals and objectives based on the student's needs, interests and desired outcomes for the future. **The Transition Plan** will include the Postsecondary Vision, Disability-related Needs and the Action Plan. The Vision Statement, TP & IEP are all reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Regular IEP meetings to address current programming and services should also continue per usual. Begin discussion about graduation and/or vocational plans for the future.

- **Outline a timeline for age-appropriate Transition Assessments.** Assessments are requested by the parent/guardian(s) and the request is submitted to the public school district verbally or in writing. Arc organizations offer vocational assessments as well if necessary, or the public school may work hand-in-hand with an organization with your permission.
 - **Begin organizing documentation of your child’s ability, medical history and level of need.** This should outline your child’s skill level in the context of health understanding, communication with medical providers, use of medication/medical supplies & equipment, access to insurance/medical records and management of lifestyle choices. Practice these skills and assess understanding at home throughout the transition process. **This is very important for future DDS eligibility.**
 - **Create a “Medical Passport”** that you can bring to all appointments and meetings with groups / individuals involved in medical care and transition planning. This can be updated over time.
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16 Years Old

- **Make sure a Chapter 688 referral is made to an appropriate human service agency.** This referral must be made 2 years prior to graduation or turning 22 years of age for individuals with disabilities that require support. DDS, MRC and DMH are commonly referred to.
 - Massachusetts Department of Education’s “A Guide to Chapter 688”:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688/brochure.pdf>
- **Get to know your human service agency liaison/coordinator once your child is found eligible for transition support. Local Arc Chapters can help you navigate** state agencies, service eligibility and other resources ranging from PCAs to college transitional programs. Invite agencies or individuals providing services for your child to the Transition Plan meetings at school, and **stay in touch with these agencies throughout the transition process.**
 - The Arc (Chapters in Massachusetts):
<http://www.thearc.org/find-a-chapter/massachusetts>
- **Begin discussing transportation considerations.** Ask agencies about specialized Driver’s Ed Programs, Travel Training Competency Assessments and Reduced Fare Eligibility. The resources below are for the Greater Boston area’s MBTA system. Be sure to look up PVTA resources for Western Massachusetts. Both should have apps for Android and iPhone that track bus and train arrival times.
 - MBTA’s The Ride:
http://www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/accessible_services/default.asp?id=7108#Ride
 - MBTA System Orientation:
http://www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/accessible_services/default.asp?id=25947
 - MBTA Reduced Fare Eligibility:
http://www.mbta.com/fares_and_passes/reduced_fare_programs/
 - Braintree Rehabilitation’s Driving Evaluation Program:
<http://www.gettingbacktolife.com/driving-evaluation>
- **Update/Revise IEP Goals, Objectives & Transition Plan (TP).** This process should be evolving as you and your child make new decisions over time.

17 Years old

- **Discuss Transfer of Parent Rights and Age of Majority or Guardianship.**
 - Massachusetts Probate & Family Court:
<http://www.mass.gov/courts/selfhelp/guardians/>
 - National Guardianship Association, Inc.:
<http://guardianship.org/>
 - LawHelp.org:
<http://www.lawhelp.org/>
- **Begin thinking about decisions regarding Health Insurance & SSI.** Individuals can remain on their parents' commercial insurance until the age of 26, but must sign up for individualized Masshealth at the age of 19.
- **Update/Revise IEP Goals, Objectives & Transition Plan.** Review decisions regarding graduation, residency, vocational programs, employment or post-secondary education with your transitioning teen, school and providers.
 - Think College: College Options for People with Disabilities:
<http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

17 ½ Years Old

- **Begin Guardianship process. Complete Clinical Team Report (CTR), Mental/Physical Incapacity, or other forms necessary to petition for guardianship.** It is extremely important to address in a **timely manner** in order to avoid needing to obtain a lawyer in the future, or needing to manage unforeseen complications associated with legal adult rights. Discuss this process with your providers in order to ensure you have completed all necessary documents. Every case is different.
- **Complete and submit SSI application**, if eligible.
 - Supplemental Security Income Program (Entry at 18):
<https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v75n3/v75n3p35.html>
- **Finalize insurance decisions for the future. Ask to be connected with a Case Manager at your insurance company** to help navigate complex issues regarding plans and services.
- **Confirm that all Releases of Information (ROIs) are in place for agencies and providers.** You will not be able to speak with your transition teen's medical care providers and/or service staff without these in place.
- **Confirm decisions on medical transfers of care and establish an adult Primary Care Provider (PCP).** Options for adult care providers should be made available to you by your PCP, specialists or your insurance company.
- **Confirm decisions on a Health Care Proxy and Durable Power of Attorney**
- **Confirm decisions on residency, vocational programs, employment, college, FAFSA/student loans, etc.** with your child and the agencies / organizations you are working with.

18 Years Old

- **Confirm decisions** related to human service agencies and programs, SSI, insurance, medical care, Transfer of Parent Rights or guardianship, residency, vocational training, employment, graduation and/or continued education until 22.
- **Make sure the transitioned adult plans to renew his/her Masshealth** coverage as an individual at the age of 19.
- **Explore college support programs, coaches and tutors** for the years ahead (if applicable). Ask your human service agency or medical provider's resource staff about options.
- If you now have guardianship, or have releases of information on file to speak with your child's medical providers, **ensure that you have continued access to the MyChildren's Portal** after your child turns 18. You can call the Portal Help Line if you experience difficulty with this (P: 617-355-6279).

***Celebrate** your child's achievements throughout this transition process. There will be progress and setbacks, as this process is complicated and requires a lot of hard work. Keep in mind that there are numerous support centers and parent support groups available. Ask your providers, agencies and community organizations about these if/when needed. You are not alone!*

Glossary

Disability

Scaffolding

Vision Statement

Letter of Intent

Transition Plan

Transition Assessments / Independent Skill Assessments

Medical Passport

Chapter 688 Referral

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

The Arc

MBTA & PVTA

Age of Majority & Transfer of Parent Rights

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Guardianship

Clinical Team Report (CTR)

Rogers Form

Release of Information

Health Care Proxy

Durable Power of Attorney

FAFSA

MyChildren's Portal

Probate & Family Court

Mental/Physical Incapacity Form