

## Special Education

### A guide for caregivers

#### At what age does my child with developmental disabilities have to leave school?

Any child with an IEP has a right to a free and appropriate public education until they turn 22. A child without an IEP (or any disability) can attend an Ohio school until they turn 22. However, if the child has met the requirements of their diploma earlier, a school can graduate the child.

#### Can I still make decisions on my child's IEP or 504 plan after they turn 18?

A child becomes their own decision maker on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan at 18 years old. A year before they turn 18, the school should tell your child that they will be the decision maker at 18. You can use that year to help your child know their IEP or 504 plan and how to make decisions. You can continue to help them after 18, but they will have the final say. If a probate court makes you your adult child's guardian, you can keep on making decisions about their IEP or 504 plan.

#### What should the school do to help my child prepare for life after high school?

At the IEP review before your child turns 14 years old and every once-a-year review after, an IEP should include a **transition plan**. The transition plan should be based on assessments of the child's interests, strengths, and needs. It should include your child's goals for after high school such as more education or working. It may also include learning life skills for being on their own. It should explain what the school will do to help the child with their goals and take steps to reach them.

A 504 plan does not have to have a transition plan. But you can ask what services they provide to help your child think about the future. There may also be services outside the school.

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#### How do I know if the goals on my child's IEP transition plan are appropriate?

It is not uncommon for IEP transition plan goals to be too broad or fail to acknowledge your child's strengths and weaknesses appropriately. If this is the case, talk with your IEP team about your concerns and sit down with them to write out SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time limited). Revisit your child's progress on these goals and revise as often as needed. Ask your child's school what resources you can utilize outside of the school to improve their progress towards postsecondary goals (Board of DD, OOD/BVR, etc.) More resources on transition planning are available in the resources section below.

#### What types of training are there for adults with disabilities?

Your local Board of Developmental Disabilities may have education and training for your child with a disability. To get Board of Developmental Disabilities services you need to show that your child had a developmental disability before the age of 22.

To find your local Board of Developmental Disabilities go to: [www.oacbddd.org](http://www.oacbddd.org).

The Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation may also provide work choices and job training. Go to: <https://ood.ohio.gov/individuals-with-disabilities/services/vocational-rehabilitation> for more information and how to apply.

The local Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation provide services to youth before they turn 18 to help with the transition. They may work with your child's school to help with their transition plan.

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### Can my child have a disability plan in college?

IEP plans are not continued in college. However, a college student with disabilities can ask a college for something like a 504 plan that will provide accommodation for their disabilities. Accommodation is one or more changes to the program that help the student but do not change what is being taught. Every college that receives money from the United States government must make reasonable accommodation for a student's disabilities. The student should go to the school's disability coordinator or accessibility office for more information on how to get a plan and make sure the accommodation happens. It would be helpful for the student to give the college a copy of the plan they had in high school. A college student does not automatically get the accommodation they did before college and will not get special education services in college.

### Call to Action!

#### Creating a community of support within and without the school system

1. Start to talk with your child about their preferences for post-secondary education and/or work experience. What are their interests/goals? Jot down your notes here:

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2. Speak with your child's education team about what grade level they are functioning at, and whether you may need to explore the option of keeping them in school longer or setting them on a vocational track. Jot down your notes here:

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3. Sometimes the schools cannot provide the experiences your child wants or needs, and you will have to **explore other options**.

- What other experiences can you give your child when it comes to work or educational experiences?
- Are there volunteer opportunities at local community centers or churches that may interest your child?
- Are there job opportunities in your neighborhood or with local businesses?
- Are there local college programs with transition prep courses for high school students with disabilities?
- Can your local Board of DD or BVR work more with your child's educational team to provide additional services and experiences?
- Jot down some thoughts here:

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#### Resources

- The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities
  - <https://www.ocecd.org/>
- The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
  - <https://laslev.org/>
- Ohio Department of Education
  - <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education>
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
  - <https://ood.ohio.gov/home>
- A Day in Our Shoes
  - <https://adayinourshoes.com/>
- Wrightslaw: Special Education Law
  - <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>