

For teens, it's time to get more involved in advocacy and to become an active participant in one's self-determination.

## Determine the goals and develop a plan

- See this as a time for researching and finding resources that fit the ten's needs
- Focus educational attention on future job possibilities and time away from home
- Work toward increased involvement in community activities
- Take necessary steps to provide for adult living arrangements
- Make plans for a continuation of care when the parents are gone

Puberty brings physical and emotional changes that can be difficult to handle in the teen years. Teenagers, including those with disabilities, go through major life changes during this time.

The transition from adolescence and adulthood is a time of growth, new experiences, risk and increasing responsibilities. It is a time of emergence, of "coming of age," and of becoming a part of the greater community.

If teens with disabilities have the needed support and appropriate outlets for their feelings and emotions, they will enter adulthood, feeling empowered and ready to exercise their independence.

When a child turns 14, it is time to begin the long road to transitioning from school life. A new set of terms and procedures arise that need to be learned and addressed in the child's IEP. Teenagers and young adults will need community activities that are age appropriate to help them



build their social and leisure skills. At home, new resources may be needed to provide day-to-day supports as family members age and the child grows in to a mature adult.

Educational needs will focus on future job possibilities, and plans for life away from home begin to unfold. Teens and adults with developmental disabilities may need and want support and services in a variety of ways – and in different areas of life. This might include assistance to live more independently, find a job or other meaningful daytime activity, pursue more education, and/or participate in leisure activities separate from family. It might also be a time to get more involved in advocacy and to become an active participant in one's self-determination.

From the parents/care-givers perspective, this is a time of researching and seeking resources that support their loved one in their jobs, in community activities and in their living arrangements and to make plans for their child's care when they are gone. Listed below are several resources that may be of interest to families supporting teens and young adults with disabilities.

### Some Key Resources

Contact the local public school to request transition planning as provided for by the Federal IDEA Amendment of 1990 (Public Law 101-496).

- Children Services, Title V Children with Special Health Care Needs 1-800-482-5850, ext. 22277
- NICHCY 1-800-695-0285
- Arkansas Medical Home 1-800-342-2793
- Arkansas People First 1-888-488-6040
- Arkansas Independent Living Council 1-800-772-0607
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) 1-800-330-0632.
- Arkansas DHS, Developmental Disability Services 1-800-482-5850, ext.

28665.

- Parent Training and Information Centers in Arkansas
- Arkansas Disability Coalition 1-800-223-1330
- FOCUS Inc. 1-888-247-3843
- Arkansas Support Network 1-800-748-9768

Medical Home Arkansas



## Teen Transition Facts for Parents and Health Care Professionals



Medical Home Arkansas

Donaghey Plaza South  
7th & Main Streets, S380  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

(501) 682-8207  
(800) 428-5850, ext. 22277  
[www.medicalhomear.org](http://www.medicalhomear.org)

- School Issues
- Medical Insurance
- Teen Issues – The Teen
- Teen Issues – Parent/Guardian
- Adult Medical System
- Guardianship

Although parents of teenagers with disabilities will find they no longer have the same authority they once had in the lives of their children, they can and should provide guidance and support through a mentoring or advisory role.

## A time for choices and decisions

Special education services are available to eligible teens until age 21 years. Eligibility for special education services depends on the severity of each teen's disability.

If in the school's opinion, the teen's disability does not interfere with the education of the student, the school may deny these services. There is an appeal process.

If the teen appears likely to meet special education eligibility, two possibilities should be considered depending on the level of services required. If the services needed are minor (e.g., a second set of books, use of the elevator, etc.), the parents/guardians should call the school counselor or principal and request the needed services with out an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If the services needed are major, the parents/guardians need to request an evaluation by the school for an IEP.

Students who receive special education services with an IEP, can remain in school until age 21, if necessary. Students with disabilities who do not receive special education with an IEP cannot remain in school until age 21, but must graduate once they have earned sufficient credits for graduation.

Beginning at age 14 years, students with disabilities who receive special education services as part of their IEP will have yearly transition planning. Students with disabilities without special education services at school, may not receive any transition planning assistance. Transition issues include basic adult survival skills, education after high school, earning a living, accessing government support, finding adult health care, and much more.



Teens should be urged to accompany their parents/guardians to IEP meetings. The IEP meetings should be monitored by the parents/guardians to ensure that the evaluation and choices are presented to the teen in a manner that he/she understands.

Additional resources for transition advice includes vocational counseling from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS). In order to receive ARS vocational services, the teen must be a junior in high school. The parents/guardians and teen must fill out the ARS application before the teen can undergo a pre-vocational evaluation.

Arkansas Medicaid Program provides personal assistant for home care for a child with a sever disability, teen and adult under age 65. Potential recipients must initially apply for Medicaid.

Information about transition and education rights are available in Arkansas at three Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) – see previous page under local, state, and federal resources.

Families are advised that after age 21, there is no entitlement to adult services including educational, vocational, residential, or other disability services. However, other services may be available and should be sought.

Teens should be urged to accompany their parents/guardians to IEP meetings. The IEP meetings should be monitored by the parents/guardians to ensure that the evaluation and choices are presented to the teen in a manner that he/she understands.

### Medical Insurance Issues/SSI

First, determine how long the teen can remain on the family health insurance policy.

The advantages between the benefits on the family health insurance policy compared to Medicaid should be reviewed. Family insurance is dependent upon where the parents/guardians work and on eligibility criteria which

will specify the teen's maximum age of coverage, whether the policy applies only while the teen is still in school or allows a dependent child with a disability to be covered after age 18 years.

With regards to Medicaid, once the teen is 18 years old, he/she may apply for both Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) based upon his/her own income, not the family income.

If the teen begins working and has health care benefits, parents should be certain the policy adequately provides for the teen's special needs. Are prescriptions, therapies and equipment covered? Which doctors can be utilized? If on Medicaid, the teen should be aware of the income limitations before losing eligibility.

Young adults with severe disabilities may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income. SSI eligibility changes when young adults reach their 18th birthday. If a young adult has been receiving SSI under the eligibility guidelines for children, his/her "case" will be transferred to the SSI program for adults and eligibility to continue to receive SSI will be redetermined.

Other young adults with severe disabilities, who previously were not eligible for SSI due to their parent's income, should be sure to apply for SSI within 30 days before their 18th birthday. Once a young adult reaches age 18, the Social Security Administration (SSA) counts only their own income and assets. Parents' income and assets are no longer counted. For more information contact your local SSA office.

### Teen Issues - The Teen

Teens should look to the future with their dreams and plans, asking regularly: What am I going to do with the rest of my life? They need to foster self-reliance, independence and survival skills.

What's more, they need to know their medications dosages, take charge of their therapies, see the medical professionals alone when appropriate and play an active role in decision-making.

Working on their disability identity, teens should learn about medical problems to the best of their ability, meet teens and adults with similar health problems and needs and learn how to identify symptoms that require medical attention.



### Teen Issues - The Parent/Guardian

Parents need to respect the teen's privacy. They should also realize that teens with special needs, like all adolescents, are vulnerable to early sexual activity, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, sexual abuse and exploration.

It's recommended that parents address these sexual issues with the teen early and often and in a way that they can understand. Parents should be forthright on sexual issues.

Gradually step back from the parental authoritarian role and move from a role of supervisor to monitor to consultant. Finally, parents need to recognize the teen's gradual need for increasing

amounts of independence and separation.

### Adult Medical System

Doctors need to discuss regularly with the teen and family the timing of transition to an adult health care provider, recommending adult primary care physicians and adult specialists who understand the teen's special needs and disability.

The family should be encouraged to get recommendations from other families for the best adult health care for their teen, suggesting several adult primary care providers who accept Medicaid, where applicable. The teen and family should be advised that once the teen is in the adult medical system, the teen may have to assume more responsibility for his/her own medical care.

### Guardianship

It is important for the family to recognize that at age 18, the parents/guardians are no longer the teen's legal guardian. That's why it is recommended that the parents/guardians consider going to the county court house to file a guardianship petition if the teen is incapable of taking care of him or herself.

Advise the parents/guardians that they may need to contact a lawyer with expertise in guardianship. To get additional information about guardianship, the family may contact the Disability Rights Center at 1-800-482-1174.