

Transition Checklist: A Time Line to Prepare for Turning Age 18

While transition should begin early in the teen years, there are specific programs that can and should be addressed near the 18th birthday. The following are some tips to help ensure that the transition to adulthood is as seamless as possible. We have included suggested time periods for addressing each area. Whenever appropriate the child should be involved in the process as much as possible, supporting the child to achieve as much independence as possible.

Up to 3 Months Before the 18th Birthday

Supplemental Security Income

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a monthly stipend paid to individuals who are disabled and have limited income and resources. For age 18 and older, only the income and resources of the person who is disabled is countable. Applications can be made up to 3 months before the 18th birthday, but the interview won't take place before the individual turns 18. SSI benefits can begin as early as one month after the child's birth month.

A child already on SSI will be re-evaluated within a year of the birthday. The definition of "disability" for an adult is different than that of a child. For a child the focus of the determination is on functional limitations; for an adult, the focus is on work.

For individuals who can work some, but less than full-time, s/he may be able to take advantage of a Work Incentives program through the Social Security Administration. Work incentives programs allow the individual to work and still receive some benefits. If in doubt as to whether the individual will qualify, an application should be submitted.

A child receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) due to the disability or death of a parent may be entitled to SSDI benefits after age 18. In the state of Indiana, qualifying for SSI at age 18 or over automatically qualifies the individual for Medicaid Disability coverage. For additional information, view our Fact Sheets: Medical Home Transition to Adult Care and Medicaid Waivers: Family Supports and CIH.

The Social Security Administration manages these programs. They may be reached by phone at 1-800-722-1213.

Guardianship or Alternatives to Guardianship

In Indiana, the age of majority (when a child becomes an adult) is 18. Parents are often surprised to learn that their child is considered an adult at this age and assumes full legal responsibility for himself, no matter the level of functioning. If the child needs assistance with financial, educational, vocational, or healthcare issues, there are several support options to consider. An attorney can provide you with possible options, but parents should pursue the least restrictive option. For more information on Alternatives to Guardianship and Guardianship, see our fact sheets on those topics.

Indiana's guardianship process varies by county. Most courts accept applications near, or just after, the 18th birthday. An attorney can be consulted any time before that; however, most prefer contact approximately 30-60 days prior to the 18th birthday.

If attorney fees and court costs pose a financial hardship, Indiana Legal Services <https://www.indianalegalservices.org/> (317) 631-9410, may be able to assist you in finding an attorney for a reduced fee or for free (pro bono), or call 2-1-1 to find local assistance.

Up to 1-2 Months Before the 18th Birthday

Medicaid

Parents should apply for Medicaid Disability for the child with the disability. If the child is already receiving Medicaid, parents should check with Medicaid to see if there are any changes that need to be made for eligibility. Be sure to notify the primary insurance of secondary coverage, if newly approved for Medicaid or other insurance (and vice versa).

Up to 29 days prior to the general election after the 18th birthday

Voter Registration

As long as the individual is eligible to vote and will be 18 before the date of the election, registration can be done any time up to 29 days before the general election date. Registration can be completed at the BMV, county clerk's office, any public assistance office, or by mail. Election dates, election changes, eligibility criteria, and other information can be found on the Indiana Voter Registration website: <https://www.in.gov/sos/elections/voter-information/register-to-vote/>

Nine months before to one month after the 18th birthday

Selective Service Registration

The law requires most men between the ages of 18 and 25 to register for Selective. This can be done either up to 30 days before, or up to 30 days after the 18th birthday. (There are some exceptions: <https://www.sss.gov/Registration-Info/Who-Registration>)

Registration for the Selective Service can be completed through one of these ways:

- Filling out a form at the post office and returning it by mail.
- Downloading and printing a form online and returning it by mail.
- Online registration: <https://www.sss.gov/Home/Registration>.

Before the 18th birthday

Medical Care

Discuss with the primary physician, as well as other providers, the approach to transition to adult care. If the provider does not want to care for the individual as an adult, then a plan to transition medical care should be created. Legally, once the patient is an adult, the provider can no longer give information to the parent without the consent of the patient. Ideally, the patient can assume his or her own care, but in cases where this is not possible, a healthcare representative may be suitable in lieu of guardianship.

At Age 14 and/or Beyond

Education

The child should already be involved in the transition process from age 14 or 9th grade – whichever comes first. Parents should be sure to attend each Transition IEP meeting and plan as with any child. The rules do change upon the child reaching 18, so the parent and child should be familiar with these changes. For complete transition procedures, rules, and rights, please refer to [Indiana Department of Education's Article 7](#), Rule 43: Related Services, Transitions, and Transfer of Rights.

Programs and systems change often. It is important to ensure that you are using the most current information. This fact sheet was updated March 2023. Please check <http://inf2f.org> for the most recent edition.

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