

Dear Parent:

This “Transition to Adulthood” binder contains important information for your adolescent student with special health care needs.

As the parent or caregiver of a child who has medical complexities and special healthcare needs, you have been your child’s champion and advocate on his journey through the education system.

Now that your student is an adolescent, it is time to start thinking and planning for his future as she\he transitions from the education system into the adult world.

We are pleased to provide you with important information on the often confusing ‘Transition to Adulthood’ process that we hope will assist you, as you, and your child prepare for the next chapter in the journey, graduation and adult services.

Even if your child is a young teen, it is never too early to begin planning and gathering information.

The Family Center, at St Vincent’s Special Needs, is available to help with the process. If you have questions, concerns, need help contacting community providers, or completing applications, please contact us at 203-386-2743 and we will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

*The SVSN Family Center Staff*

Donna Kennedy, Coordinator  
Lori Chiappiniello, Family Center Associate  
Cynthia Stramandinoli, Family Center Associate  
Maritza Hurley, Bilingual Family Center Associate  
Sarah Zopfi, Family Center Volunteer



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## INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD

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### *For Children with Special Needs and People Who Love and Care for Them*

Transitions are never easy. This is especially true when a child has special needs. Because of the many medical, educational, safety and financial concerns, families have to carefully prepare for the time when their child leaves school. The information in this packet can serve as a starting point for your family.

**Please note that you might notice that there are two important milestones for your child:**

#### **Age 18:**

1. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is the primary agency that will provide **long term funding for day services that your child will require after exiting the school program**. If you have not already registered your child with DDS you should start this process now. DDS can also assist you to access other services and resources for your child
2. Your child becomes his/her own legal guardian, unless you **apply to probate court for guardianship**.
3. Your child is now considered to be an adult with disabilities, financial assistance may be available for them. You may apply to see if your child is eligible for **SSI** and **TITLE 19** if they are not already receiving it.
4. All male US citizens who are 18 are required to register with the Selective Service. Men with disabilities that would disqualify them from military service still must register.

#### **Age 21:**

1. Graduation — **School services stop the year your child turns 21**. The school year is July-June 30. Students turning 21 July 1 or after are entitled to the full school year they turn 21.
2. **After graduation, there are no guaranteed services**. Families apply to DDS and other agencies to fund adult programming but those funds are neither guaranteed or an entitlement and are determined by DDS and government budgets. This is why planning ahead is important.

## TIMELINE

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### **Before the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday:**

If you have not done so already, make application on behalf of your child to the State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, **(DDS)**. **DDS** is the gatekeeper of adult services and is the funding source for adult programs. Request an application from DDS by calling 1-877-491-2720 or email: [DDS.Eligibility@ct.gov](mailto:DDS.Eligibility@ct.gov)

### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP):**

Your child's PPT must develop a plan to help your child be prepared for life after school. This written plan, called an **Individual Transition Plan (ITP)**, is developed at the annual PPT following your child's 15th birthday (**or** younger, if appropriate). If your child is involved with an adult agency such as the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), a representative or your child's case manager from that agency should attend the meeting.

The ITP must be based on your child's needs and take into account his or her preferences and interests. The ITP must include:

- long-range goals and specific objectives for: employment, post-secondary training, education, independent living skills (if appropriate), and community involvement.
- services needed to meet the above goals.
- person or agency responsible for providing the services.
- ways in which the school and any adult agencies will need to work together before your child leaves school to make sure there is no interruption in services.

### **Summary of Performance:**

Before your child graduates with a regular high school diploma or finishes the school year when he or she turns 21, the school must give you a report called a Summary of Performance. It will include:

- your child's academic achievement,
- your child's functional performance, and
- recommendations on how to help your child in meeting his or her goals after high school.

### **At the age of 16:**

Beginning no later than the IEP in place by the student's sixteenth birthday, **the IEP must identify transition goals, objectives, and services**. Since in Connecticut the age of majority is eighteen, the IDEA requires that no later than a student's seventeenth birthday, the school district should be explaining to students that upon their eighteenth birthday, their rights under IDEA transfer from the parents to the student.

### **Before the age of 17:**

If a student is not legally competent to make educational decisions upon turning eighteen, parents should begin the process of obtaining legal decision-making authority for their child in advance. **The guardianship/conservatorship process** should begin. (The age of majority in Connecticut is 18) Since in Connecticut the age of majority is eighteen, the IDEA requires that no later than a student's seventeenth birthday, the school district should be explaining to students that upon their eighteenth birthday, their rights under IDEA transfer from the parents to the student. If a student is not legally competent to make educational decisions upon turning eighteen, parents should begin the process of obtaining legal decision-making authority for their child in advance.

The student must be informed of the transfer of rights and guardianship options by age 17. There needs to be a statement of informed consent, detailing that the individual recognizes that they will have to make their own educational decisions after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Application for Guardianship should be made through your town's Probate Court.  
<http://www.jud.ct.gov/probate/faq3.html>

### **Before the age of 18:**

Apply for Social Security benefits, Social Security Disability Insurance and Medicaid in the students own name, not the parents. This should occur shortly before your child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but will not be processed until your child is officially 18 years of age.

### **At age 18: from entitlement to eligibility...**

- Upon an individual's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he or she changes from a system of being entitled to certain rights and privileges, to a system of eligibility.
- Male students should register for the draft, no matter the level of functioning.
- Once your child has been determined eligible for the Department of Developmental Services, and Medicaid (T19) he/she will be assigned a case manager. If you have questions or concerns about the assignment of your DDS case manager, contact the DDS helpline at 1 877-491-2720.
- Be in touch regularly with your case manager. They will schedule an in person interview with you and your child to discuss adult services and your child's **LON** (Level of Need) planning. This planning will assist both you and the Department in determining how much funding will be set aside to provide services for your child when he graduates into Adult Programming.
- As youth with special health care needs grow into adulthood, they will need **to transition from pediatric health care into adult medical care**, requiring them to find a new care provider.
- The goal in transitioning to adult health care services is to maximize lifelong functioning through high-quality age-appropriate health care services that are coordinated, continuous, and comprehensive.
- All adults with special health care needs deserve an adult-focused primary care physician. This affirms that adults benefit from physicians who are experienced and trained in adult medicine.
- **Begin to research and visit adult agencies, vocational and day programs, and supported living programs** to select the best "fit" for your student

### **By age 20 to 21:**

Select and finalize selected adult service program.

- Work with your child's teacher and new adult program provider to **set up a transitional visiting program** to help your child adjust gradually to his new environment and to give yourself the opportunity to share important information about your child with his/her new program staff.
- To ease transition, make sure your child has and **updated physical** and that all medical information is up to date.
- Make sure the new Adult Program **staff is trained** in the use and safety of any **special equipment your child uses on a regular basis; power chairs, standers, walkers, specialized feeding equipment, orthotics, etc.**

## WHAT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE STATEMENT OF NEEDED TRANSITION SERVICES?

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- Instruction can take place in a classroom, small group or one-to-one learning. It can be provided in public schools, private schools, at home, or in the community.
- Related Services may include transportation, speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy and other supportive services necessary for a student to benefit from special education.
- Community experiences may be provided in communities by schools, consultants, private providers or other agencies.
- Employment/other post-school adult living objectives may lead to a paid job or career opportunity, or other important adult activities.
- Daily living skills are the types of activities most adults do every day at home and in the community.
- Functional vocational evaluation provides information about job or career interests, aptitude and skills.

If the IEP team, including the student and the parents, agree that services in one or more of the areas above is not needed, the IEP must state so and provide a rationale.

### **Community-Based Instruction:**

Community-based instruction can be a very important part of a transition IEP. It involves learning by doing. The student receives life skills, social skills, or work instruction at a community site (e.g., supermarket, library, bus stop, office) with either one-on-one support or in a small group. The instruction is designed to teach functional skills of everyday life through hands on experiences. Goals such as learning to shop, learning to use public transportation, ordering food in a restaurant, making change, or using a map may best be learned through community-based instruction.