



## Tips for Youth Turning 18 and Their Parents

**Talk to your pediatric physicians about transitioning to adult medical care providers.** Many pediatric providers will no longer see individuals with disabilities when they reach the age of majority. Thus, it is important to make this transition with the support of your medical providers.

**If you have heard that guardianship is your only option for decision-making, consider other alternatives.** A guardian is a person appointed by a court who is responsible for making decisions for someone who is incapacitated (unable to make decisions). If a guardian is appointed, you lose many rights, including the right to vote, drive, get married, sign any document, decide where you live and work, and make treatment decisions. Alternatives to Guardianship can include Powers of Attorney, Advance Directives, and Representative Payees.



**Talk to your IEP team about the transfer of rights and consider an educational power of attorney.** This option keeps the student in control of decisions and parents in the information loop in order to assist with decision making. An "educational representative" is a parent, family member or other adult authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of an adult student. dLCV has created an [Educational Power of Attorney form](#) you can use to appoint an educational representative.



**Verify with your school counselor your anticipated graduation or exit date from high school.** This allows you the opportunity to make plans for additional education or training toward employment including getting connected with appropriate agencies. If you are not working toward a standard or advanced studies diploma, you have the opportunity to remain in school through the age of 21.

**Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at your local Social Security office.** SSI is a federally-funded needs-based disability program which provides monthly cash benefits.

**Apply for Medicaid at your local Department of Social Services office.** Medicaid is a program, funded by federal and state government, which pays for medical care for those who can't afford it. Eligibility for SSI usually qualifies you for Medicaid, but

applications for both must be completed. [Learn more about Virginia's medical assistance programs.](#)

**Apply for the appropriate Medicaid Waiver to get your name on the waiting list.** Virginia has several [Medicaid Waivers](#) that provide services and supports to assist individuals with disabilities with their needs in the community. Each Waiver has a specific process for entering the system, eligibility, and the variety of services available. Individuals can be on one waiting list while receiving services from another waiver. Some waiting lists are very long so it is best to apply as soon as possible.

**Discuss your family's current estate plan to determine if changes need to be made to protect benefits.** If you believe that you will require Medicaid, SSI, or other governmental subsidies, discuss a [Special Needs Trust](#) (SNT). A SNT allows you to plan for your financial future and prevent being disqualified for benefits due to having too much money or property. Ask other family members if their estate plans include the possibility of you receiving any money or property. Financial gifts from well-meaning family members, upon their death or before, can jeopardize your eligibility for necessary governmental benefits.



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