

Life After High School

A Florida readiness checklist for families of teens with IEPs

Graduation can feel like a cliff: school services end, and families are suddenly on their own. **Here's the truth:** the cliff is avoidable when planning starts early. In Florida, transition planning in the IEP must begin before your child enters high school or by age 14, whichever comes first. Check off what's in place.

By age 14 (or before 9th grade)

- ☐ The IEP has measurable goals for life after school: education or training, employment, and, if needed, independent living.
- ☐ Your teen is invited to their IEP meetings and helps plan.
- ☐ You've talked about the diploma path and what each option means.
- ☐ Your teen is exploring interests, strengths, and job ideas.

Ages 15–16

- ☐ Work experience is happening: volunteering, job shadowing, or a first job.
- ☐ Your teen practices self-advocacy: explaining their needs and accommodations.
- ☐ You've asked about Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and pre-employment transition services.
- ☐ Daily living skills are being taught: money, cooking, transportation.

Age 17 (one year before 18)

- ☐ You and your teen have been told that educational rights transfer to them at 18.
- ☐ You've learned about decision-making options, from supported decision-making and powers of attorney to guardian advocacy and guardianship, and talked with an attorney if needed.
- ☐ You know whether your teen will graduate on time or stay to keep receiving services, and how that affects the diploma.

Age 18 and beyond

- ☐ Applications are in for adult supports your teen may qualify for (for example SSI, Medicaid, or APD services).
- ☐ Health care is moving from pediatric to adult providers.
- ☐ There's a plan for each day after school ends: work, school, training, or a program.
- ☐ Your teen has copies of key documents: ID, Social Security card, IEP, evaluations.

A quick tip

If the transition section of the IEP is a page of generic statements, ask: "What assessments were used to write these goals, and what services will help my teen reach them this year?" Transition goals should be based on your teen's own interests and assessments.

Plan the transition with confidence

I'm the author of the *Transition That Holds Up* book series and hold a Graduate Certificate in Secondary Special Education and Transition. I help Florida families build transition plans that actually prepare teens for what comes next.

Non-attorney advocacy. Not legal advice. Talk with an attorney about guardianship and decision-making options.

[Book a free consultation](#)

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