

Navigate Life Texas - Transition to Adulthood

Adapted from the Navigate Life Website, September 2021
<https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/transition-to-adulthood>



When we live with and support children who have disabilities or special health care needs, we often hear the word "transition." We talk about transitioning between activities. We talk about transitioning between schools. And we talk about the process of transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

Even though the law says that your child becomes an adult on their 18th birthday, adulthood really doesn't happen overnight for any child. From the moment your child takes that first breath, they are on the path toward adulthood and greater independence. We have the chance to help them prepare from day one.

We can help our children learn to take responsibility for themselves in so many ways. We can teach them to greet their doctors, ask questions, and describe their symptoms. We can encourage them to do tasks and chores around the house. We can help them find a neighborhood or volunteer job. We can teach them to talk to teachers about their needs.

But even with preparation, most of us have mixed feelings as we approach our child's transition to adulthood. We might feel: excitement, concern, relief, fear, and maybe even a little bit of grief as we watch our children grow into young adults. As parents of children with disabilities or special health care needs, our fears and anxieties can be especially intense. We know our children will still need extra care and guidance. Our challenge is to find the balance between keeping them safe and giving them the freedom to be independent.

There Is Help

The good news is that there are lots of other families facing the same questions and challenges. And, there are people who can help you:

- [Connect with other parents](#) who are going through the same thing so you have people to answer your questions or lend a caring ear.
- [Look for organizations in your community](#) that offer families help with transition.
- Find good tools in the Texas Parent to Parent [Pathways to Adulthood](#) program.

Transition Action Groups (TAGs)

Texas Parent to Parent has created Transition Action Groups (TAGs) as part of their Pathways to Adulthood program. These groups of parents and children get together often to help each other make transition easier.

TAGs can help families with many things, including:

- Making transition plans.
- Finding and setting up living arrangements.
- Sharing facts and tips about schools, benefits, and caregivers.
- Having a social outlet – for children and parents.
- Giving emotional support to each other.

If you are interested in finding or starting a TAG near you, Texas Parent to Parent can help. Visit their [Pathways to Adulthood](#) page to learn more.

Waivers and Transition

The biggest question of all is this: How can my child and family get ready for all of these changes? Finding the answers might take a lot of time and planning. Many people say it's never too early to start transition planning. For example, waivers that can help your child gain independence have long interest (waiting) lists, and it can take many years to get into these programs.

If you haven't already signed up, go to our [Waivers page](#) to find out more. It's never too late to start transition planning. Whether your child is 4, 14, or 24 years old, you can start from where you are to make their adult life better.