

What Happens When My Child Has an IEP and Turns 18?

Did you know that students who turn 18 get to make their own school decisions, even if they have a disability and an IEP?

Here are two ways that you can still help your child with school decisions after he or she turns 18:

- Supported decision-making
- Educational power of attorney

To discuss these options more, contact:

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Making good decisions is a skill that people learn over time.

Students with disabilities need a chance to practice making decisions, and they need your support!

What is “supported decision-making”? – A way you can help your child learn to make good decisions and to ask for help from others when needed.

- After your child turns 18, ask him or her to sign a “release form”, so you can still get information and records from the school.
- Help your child send a letter to the school that says he or she wants you to be invited to all meetings.
- Help your child get ready for school meetings ahead of time by:
 - Talking about the last IEP and any new reports or evaluations
 - Talking over what your child likes and does not like about school.
 - Helping your child write down any questions to ask at the meeting.
- Go to your child’s school meetings, but let your child speak! You can offer reminders and share your ideas when your child asks.
- Feel free to step out of the meeting to talk one-on-one with your child, if you want to share your concerns or talk through something.
- Let your child know he/she can take home any papers before signing them and can take time before making a decision.

What is an “educational power of attorney”? – A legal paper where your adult child agrees to let you make his/her school decisions or to share that decision-making power with you.

- A “power of attorney”:
 - Has legal power, without you going to court.
 - Can apply even if your child is later found not to be able to make decisions.
 - Is signed – willingly, in front of a notary public – by your child.
 - Lets your child choose who will make his/her decisions.
 - Lets your child change his or her mind and cancel the power of attorney.
- To sign a power of attorney, your child does not need to know all about his or her IEP rights. Your child only needs to know that a power of attorney gives you the right to make or help make some of his/her decisions.