

# ENGAGE



ENGAGING THE NEW GENERATION TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

## **TRANSITION TOOLKIT FOR FAMILIES**

ENGAGE Family Advisory Council  
September, 2016

**Transition Toolkit for Families**  
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If you are reading this, you are likely helping a teen or young adult transition to independence. You are likely one of us—a parent, family member, partner, or youth.

You don't have to do this alone! There are professionals and family members willing to help. Please take time to search [www.redtreehouse.org](http://www.redtreehouse.org) for services, support groups and trainings that will help you along the way. Family and Children First Council (FCFC) is a wonderful resource that can help you find resources in your own county. You can find your Council at <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/>

The information contained here comes from experience and research—it is not legal advice. We are not legal experts. This comes from our desire to help you avoid some of the problems we've encountered as we've helped our kids move into adulthood.

This is current as of September, 2016. We've done our best to give you links so you can verify and find updated material since things do change over time.

It is our hope that this toolkit saves you time and frustration in your journey.

Sincerely,

ENGAGE Family Advisory Council

### **What is ENGAGE?**

ENGAGE (Engaging the Next Generation to Achieve Their Goals through Empowerment) is an initiative of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (ODMHAS), funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA). The goal of ENGAGE is to establish High-Fidelity Wraparound statewide as a tool to develop and strengthen local Systems of Care. Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YYAT) aged 14-18 will need their parents or guardians to help refer them to this program. Young adults 18-21 (independent or under guardianship) can refer themselves. Your local Family and Children First Council can help you through the referral process and answer any questions.

ENGAGE Wraparound is specifically centered on youth aged 14-21 with mental health concerns who are transitioning to adulthood. This group gathers to help youth develop a plan for their own future. The group and family will work with the youth to help identify unmet needs and help the youth reach their goals. Employment, education, financial planning, housing, social needs, medical and mental health concerns, management planning and other identified needs can all be part of the plan.

For more information: <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/Initiatives/ENGAGE.aspx>

## Calling 911

Most of us know that 911 is called only in an emergency. If someone is injured or unconscious you know you should definitely call. But, what about someone having an adverse reaction to prescription, over-the-counter or illegal drugs? What about someone having a mental health crisis?

In both drug and mental health crises you should also call 911 and request a Crisis Intervention Team officer (CIT) if available. (For more information about CIT <http://www.nami.org/cit> ) The personnel who will respond to the call will have two things you cannot provide - specialized training and less emotional involvement.

However, there are things you can do to help beyond just making the call. First – remain on the line until the dispatcher tells you it is okay to hang up.

Be specific about the problem – “my son is hallucinating and seeing things that aren't here”; “my daughter is convulsing, she is not an epileptic”.

Be prepared to give your name, the address where the crisis is occurring, and your phone number. If you do not know the exact address be as descriptive and precise as possible – “I am at the blue house three doors down from the corner of Jones and Smith roads on the southeast side, my 2010 green Honda is in the drive”.

Let the dispatcher know of any physical or mental conditions of the person in distress. Are they diabetic, on anti-depressants, on a new medicine, or increased/decreased dosage, etc?

Tell them if alcohol or drugs – prescription, over-the-counter, or illegal – are being used by the individual in distress. Report any diagnosis of a physical, developmental or mental health condition. This is not the time to continue keeping a family secret; tell the dispatcher. Your silence could be fatal.

For everyone's safety turn on all lights in the home so the arriving police and/or EMT's can see clearly. Do not run up to the arriving personnel. Do not have anything in your hands when you go to meet them.

Identify yourself as the caller. Tell your relationship to the person in distress – spouse, parent, sibling, friend, or neighbor.

Report any prior incidents that are similar to the present crisis. Has this happened before with discontinuance, or dosage change, of medications? Has there been a history of suicide attempts? Again, hold back no pertinent information. No one has ever died from embarrassment; they have from incomplete information.

If possible, tell them the name of any person medically or psychologically treating the person in crisis. If you do not know a specific person's name, the clinic or counseling center name will be helpful.

Parents of children of all ages sometimes find themselves in a position where their child is in a crisis and needs help. If you cannot get your child to a location to receive help, please call 911 to get them the help they need.

## **Prepare for a crisis before you are in crisis**

Before your family is in a crisis make a plan. Be sure to include a summary of your medical history. This is the information your attending physician would need to have in case of emergency medical treatment or hospitalization.

Take some time to write out a reverse chronology (newest to oldest) medical history. First gather any records you or your youth/young adult have.

Written Plan: This is a simple template to prepare in advance and keep in easily accessible places like your glove compartment and purse or backpack: [Adult crisis plan \(fillable Word\)](#)

[Here](#) is another example of a crisis plan worksheet.

County Resources: Find out before you are in crisis what resources are available in your county. <http://mha.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=790>

Law Enforcement: Many Ohio Counties/cities have a team of police officers who are trained in mental health/developmental disabilities crisis intervention. Call your local police department to find out if there is a CIT team available. Find out in advance of a crisis so that if you need to call law enforcement for help you will know if you should request a CIT officer. Do not call 911 for information unless you are currently experiencing an emergency. [http://www.namiohio.org/mental\\_health\\_programs/CIT](http://www.namiohio.org/mental_health_programs/CIT)

## Education: Websites for Families

1. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/> contains very helpful fact sheets and other applicable information for parents. The topic areas include:
  - Transition to adulthood
  - Careers
  - College
  - Resources
2. <http://www.tnstep.org/> offers downloadable packets for students and their families. (Available in English and Spanish)
3. <http://www.ocali.org/> Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence has information on transition to adulthood and is a wealth of information on other topic areas that are applicable for all youth and their families. (Available in English and Spanish)
4. <http://www.wrightslaw.com/> focuses on Special Education Laws and Education Laws and Advocacy for Children with disabilities. It also offers a free subscription to their weekly newsletter on special education advocacy. This website has excellent information but can be difficult to navigate. (Doing a browser search and include wrightslaw.org might be easier.)

## Introduction to Transition Planning in the Education System

*NOTE: CHANGES IN LAW HAPPEN WITH SOME FREQUENCY. CHECK [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com) for updates.*

It's a good idea to start thinking about your child's future from an early age. A simple statement can be added to even the first IEP if you and your child are ready to do that. It could be as simple as "John loves trains and wants to work on trains when he grows up."

Formal transition planning on the Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be in place by the young person's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday but can begin earlier. All sections of the Transition Plan must be filled out. In the first year there are generally aptitude tests and conversations about what your child wants to do, what they are good at and what their dreams are. Transition plans can, and should, be updated with frequency. You will be consulted—but this isn't about your dreams.

Three areas that the transition plan must consider are further education, employment and independent living. This is what special education is all about: "To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for **further education, employment, and independent living.**" (IDEA 34 CFR 300.1) As your child matures transition plans will become more detailed according to his/her interests and increased skills.

Be aware that functional life skills are not usually included in the transition plan but can be. Examples include how to shave and that a red octagon means stop.

This is some of what the Ohio Department of Education has to say about getting ready for Transition Planning IEP meeting: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Secondary-Transition-Planning-for-Students-with-Di>

Here is some of what the US Department of Education has to say about it: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/.root.dynamic.TopicalBrief.17>.

### **Who should attend a Transition Planning IEP meeting?**

All those required by federal law to be on the IEP team (General Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, District Representative, Speech and/or Occupational Therapist, School District Representative), you (who are a legal member of the team) and new with transition planning—your child.

This is about your child—and by law, your child must be invited to the transition planning IEP meetings. (There is a form, PR-02, that the school should use; it's the same form they send to invite you to IEP meetings. It can be mailed or hand delivered to your child during school hours.) This is about your child's future; it is in their best interest to participate in this planning.

As with all IEP meetings, you can invite anyone involved who can add information and expertise to the meeting. Depending on your child's diagnosis consider inviting transition planning specialists from the school and/or Department of Developmental Disabilities,

mental health professionals, Child Protective Services, medical (doctor or nurse), Family and Children First Council Wraparound or Service Coordinator, Career Center, College or Trade School representative. There are no right or wrong choices. Discuss this with your youth and together decide who should be invited.

## **Turning 18**

Everything can change at 18 depending on custody. Unless a family acts to retain custody of a youth turning 18, you are no longer allowed access to your young person's educational or medical records. You will only be invited to IEP meetings if your young person wants you there. (See the toolkit section about Custody.) Talk to your youth about this in advance.

### **To accept a diploma or not to accept a diploma?**

Believe it or not this is not an easy decision but an important one. Special education must be provided until your child's 22nd birthday unless they accept a diploma or chose not to continue their education. A social graduation (without diploma) does not close this door. If a young person drops out after age 18, they cannot go back to school.

Depending on your child's plans, ability, readiness and maturity, staying on and taking electives, going to the career center or working in the school's coffee shop might be a good thing.

Talk to the IEP team throughout transition planning about this. Even a young person who is academically capable of going straight to college or into a career might benefit from an extra year or two to mature.

## **Changing Schools**

Changing school buildings, even inside the same school district (elementary to middle, middle to high school) does require planning. This is not only for the sake of transitioning the IEP team and getting the next year's team up to date, but also for your youth. New is scary. It is for all of us—and more so for a young person who is trying to fit in, make new friends and learn the layout of a new building.

Plan ahead! Before the school year ends, schedule an IEP team meeting with both schools' personnel. Many school districts do this as a matter of course; others do not since it's not legally required. You have the legal right to convene an IEP team meeting whenever you need one. Take advantage of this right and help your young person start the year with a well-informed IEP team.

During this meeting, ask if your child can practice walking the route between classes, opening his/her new locker and meet their new teachers. Depending on your child's academic challenges you might want to ask for copies of the coming year's text books to get a head start over the summer or ask for summer work to do so that skills are not lost.

When changing schools means changing districts, make sure you have all the paperwork you need for a smooth transition. Although schools are required to send a copy of the IEP to a new district, things can get delayed or lost. Be proactive.

Before the end of the school year, schedule time with your school district to see your child's file. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) gives you the right to see the entire file—and law allows you to have copies of anything you want for a “reasonable” fee. Ohio Department of Education considers that to be \$.10 or less per page. Some schools can send you an electronic copy or you can make PDFs by taking pictures with your phone using a conversion app. The school **must** give you a copy of the IEP at no charge. Make sure you have a current copy to take with you to the new building.

If you are unable to obtain physical copies of your underage child's documentation, but have their state student number (found on all report cards, IEPs, etc.), you can contact the Ohio Department of Education (614-752-1404) and obtain records using that number.

## Paying for Higher Education

### US Federal government

- grants-financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid
- loans-borrowed money for college or career school; must be repaid with interest
- work study-a work program through which you earn money to help pay for school

### Aid and other Resources from the Federal Government

- Aid for serving in the military or for being the spouse or child of a veteran (including orphans of military killed in action) Talk to your county Veteran's Board for more information or visit [www.dvs.ohio.gov](http://www.dvs.ohio.gov)
- Tax benefits for education
- An Education Award for community service with AmeriCorps
- Educational and Training Vouchers for current and former foster care youth and/or
- Scholarship and loan repayment through the Department of Health and Human Services' Indian Health Service, National Institutes of Health, and National Health Service Corps

Federal student aid covers such expenses as tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. Aid also can help pay for other related expenses, such as a computer and dependent care. Thousands of schools across the country participate in the Federal Student aid programs, ask individual schools to see if they participate.

### State government aid

- An individual might be eligible for assistance from their respective states even if not eligible through the federal government
- Contact your state grant agency.

#### State Department of Education

Ohio Department of Education  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215-4183  
(877)644-6338  
<http://www.ode.state.oh.us>

#### State Higher Education Agency

Ohio Board of Regents  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614)466-6000  
<http://www.ohiohighered.org/able>

Special Education Agency  
Office for Exceptional Children  
Ohio Department of Education  
25 South Front Street, Mail Stop 409  
Columbus, OH 43215-4183  
(877)644-633f8  
<http://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education>

State Adult Education Agency  
Ohio Board of Regents  
University System of Ohio  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614)466-6000  
<http://www.ohiohighered.org/able>

#### Aid from College or Career School

- Visit school's Financial Aid office or website for further information
- Ask about available scholarships

#### Other Helpful Sources

- Charitable Foundations Directory—Ohio Attorney General (divided by category, look for scholarships, education, disability, general)
- Talk to your high school guidance counselor, transition counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor or Educational Service Center
- Community clubs, religious organizations, community foundations, veteran's organizations, etc.
- Search online for scholarships, loans, etc. by category and search words:  
<http://www.finaid.org/>

## Postsecondary Education – What does it look like for Students with Disabilities?

**What is the Law?** Title II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, state that postsecondary schools, whether public, private, or vocational, if they receive government funding, must provide accommodations for students with disabilities. However, the burden of seeking and receiving appropriate services typically lies with the student. Each government-funded school must provide an ADA/504 Coordinator. Contact information for disability services at Ohio colleges can be found at this website: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

**What is required to prove eligibility?** Requirements vary and typically include a copy of the most recent IEP and current documentation completed by a professional (either physician or psychologist, rehabilitation counselor, or other professional) familiar with the disability.

**What may be provided?** Examples of services that may be offered are:

- Increased time accommodations for enrolling or testing
- Allowing note-takers, recorded lectures or transcriptionists for classes
- Communicating class requirements in a clearly understood pathway
- Service animals
- Architectural changes to ensure accessibility (depending on the age of the institution and whether similar classrooms can be offered)

Modifications of the school's policies and practices are **not** required when it fundamentally alters the nature of the program, class, or activity. There are advantages and disadvantages unique to each state university or private institution – check them out! Also, there are schools designed for particular learning disabilities, such as the College Internship Program (CIP). <http://cipworldwide.org/>

**Are monies provided to students?** Funding to students with disabilities is not provided under the ADA; tuition support may be available through vocational rehabilitation services, federal grants, or scholarships specific to the disability.

Additional resources may be found at:

<http://www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/504.asp>, Pacer Center, Champions for Children with Disabilities.

[www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu) is the Heath Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center in Washington, D.C.

## EDUCATION SYSTEM'S TRANSITION TIMELINE CHECKLIST

STUDENT AGE	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
<b>JUNIOR HIGH</b>			
12 – 15	Include the following areas in IEP meetings: social skills, communication, functional math, functional reading, self-help skills, self-advocacy skills		
12 – 15	Develop and use a plan to increase responsibilities and independence and to develop life skills at school and home		
14+	Obtain official identification card at the Driver's License Bureau, school or bank		
14+	Initial transition meeting as part of the IEP process Begin transition-related assessment process -identify vocational interest/abilities -identify vocational support needed Include activities such as -career exploration -job sampling -introduction to vocational training		
14+	Teach student to use public transportation		
14+	Begin the process of identifying community services that provide job training and placements		
15	Prepare job placement file with references and descriptions of acquired skills		
15	Initiate application to adult services agencies with lengthy waiting lists (i.e., DSPD)		
15	Consider summer employment/volunteer experience		

<b>SENIOR HIGH</b>			
16 – 18*	Contact Adult Service Programs:		
	1. Education and training (postsecondary)		
	2. Social Security disability programs (includes Medicare and Medicaid)		
	3. Residential Services		
	4. Vocational		
	5. Recreational/Leisure Activities		
	6. Medical		
	7. Explore support group options		
16	Make certain transition-related assessments and goals are part of the IEP		
16+	Investigate the need for a driver's license and Driver's education		
16-18*	Begin job-training at community sites and/or through Vocational Education Programs		
17	Begin to consider and research guardianship		
17	Review of IEP Transition Plan		
17-18*	ACT and SAT tests (study, practice and graded test) if applicable		
17-18*	Complete applications to colleges or Postsecondary training if applicable		
18*	Develop a resume		
18*	Update transition-related assessments and goals on IEP		
18*	Establish needed health benefits		
18*	Develop long-term financial support plan		
18*	Update postsecondary plan in cooperation with adult service agencies to determine:		
	- Vocational direction		
	- Living arrangements		
	- Transportation needs		
	- Social/recreational/leisure needs		
	- Medical/health support		

\* Depending on extent of disability, some students will have until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday to accomplish transition goals.

## Transition to Adulthood Planning for Students with IEPs

As the name implies, transition services exist to help students with disabilities move from school to adulthood. The transition section of the Individual Education Program (IEP) addresses further education, employment and independent living and must be developed by the IEP team, which includes the student, parents or guardians, special education teacher, general education teacher, therapists or others who are involved with the student and a school district representative. If the student qualifies or may qualify, it's a good idea to invite a representative from your county Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Transition services are based on the student's needs and must address the student's preferences and interests—don't ever forget that in the end, it is your child's life... the law requires that they have a say and as parents, we want them to be happy with their choices. Here's some more information on student participation:  
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/student-involvement/>

Transition services must be a coordinated set of activities oriented toward producing results. This is what [parentcenterhub.org](http://www.parentcenterhub.org) has to say about the activities required:

- Activities need to be coordinated with each other.
- The process focuses on results.
- Activities must address the child's academic and functional achievement.
- Activities are intended to smooth the young person's movement into the post-school world.

You can also see that the definition mentions the domains of independent and adult living. The community... employment... adult services... daily living skills... vocational... postsecondary education. This clearly acknowledges that adulthood involves a wide range of skills areas and activities. It also makes clear that preparing a child with a disability to perform functionally across this spectrum of areas and activities may involve considerable planning, attention, and focused, coordinated services.

Note that word—coordinated. We italicized it above because it's very important. Transition activities should not be haphazard or scattershot. Services are to be planned as in sync with one another in order to drive toward a result.

What result might that be? From a federal perspective, the result being sought can be found in the very first finding of Congress in IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) , which refers to "our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." [20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(1)] Preparing children with disabilities to "lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible" is one of IDEA's stated objectives. [20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(5)(A)(ii)]"

**The student must be invited to any IEP meeting where postsecondary goals and transition services needed to reach those goals will be considered.** (It is up to the child, parent and/or guardian if the student does attend.)

As of June 30, 2015 the following is applicable in Ohio: Ohio requires that schools begin Transition Planning with students and families by the IEP that will be in place on the student's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is ahead of federal law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that requires transition planning to begin by the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

What the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act says about transition:

### **IDEA §300.43 Transition services.**

(a) **Transition services** means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

(1) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

(2) Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes

- (i) Instruction;
- (ii) Related services;
- (iii) Community experiences;
- (iv) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- (v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

(b) Transition services for children with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.

All of these links have great information for students with IEP's and transition planning.

Good, easy to read information about Transition planning:

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/transitionadult/>

Information on Special Education law, blogs and valuable FAQs:

[www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)

Thinking about College: <http://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/resources-for-students-with-disabilities/>

OCALI on Transition— It includes valuable information for all students—not just those with autism! [http://www.ocali.org/project/transition\\_to\\_adulthood\\_guidelines](http://www.ocali.org/project/transition_to_adulthood_guidelines)

## **Setting up a budget and keeping your financial records safe:**

Setting up a budget—and sticking to it—helps us stay out of trouble, plan for big things we will need or we want, helps us save for rainy days that will come sooner or later. It's surprisingly easy to set up a budget—sticking to it? That involves some discipline!

### Getting started:

Think about where you (or your youth/young adult) want to store your financial records. Are you comfortable doing it electronically or would you rather keep a paper copy in a drawer, file cabinet, box or binder? How much do you want to spend to set up your personal system? How will you keep your personal information safe—do you need a locked drawer/box, or would you rather a password protected computer file? Can you scan documents that you need to keep or do you need to keep copies?

What is your organization style? Do you want to file your records by category/company or by month? That will determine how many files or envelopes you need. It's a good idea to keep your financial records for 7 years so keep that in mind. A lot of people clear out their files and move them into a box every year after taxes are sent in.

Budgets can be maintained on a digital spreadsheet, in a handwritten notebook, or kept in a binder. Pinterest.com has a lot of ideas about how to organize your financial papers (and anything else you can imagine). It doesn't really matter what appearance or format you chose. What is important is that the system you chose works for you and that your files are kept safe.

### Making a Budget:

Budgeting worksheets and calculators are available for free download from literally hundreds of websites—some are very pretty and others much more straight forward. There are a number of ways to figure out how much of your income should go into any particular category but as a general rule of thumb:

25-40% Housing (depending on whether utilities are included)

8-10% Utilities

15-25% Food and personal items

5-15% Transportation and insurance

15% Debt repayment

5-10% Savings

5% Unexpected expenses

5% Entertainment

There are lots of ideas used by families to teach budgeting to their children/youth—blogs, magazines, school curriculum... if you do a simple search you will find an abundance! There are budgeting tools on the Office of the Treasurer of the State of Ohio website (<http://www.tos.ohio.gov/>) Here's the 20 Square Salary game from that site: <http://ohiotreasurer.gov/Documents/CMS/BudgetGame8%205x11.pdf> (Copy and paste this link into your browser)

The important thing to remember is that the sooner you start teaching your children about money (and the value of work in relation to money) the better off our kids will be as they transition to adulthood. If you haven't started working on this skill—it's not too late!

**Resources:**

The Federal Trade Commission has a comprehensive tool that walks you through developing your own budget—or helping your transition aged youth/young adult develop theirs. It includes videos, worksheets and good, easy to understand reasons why making and keeping to a budget matters:

<https://www.consumer.gov/articles/1002-making-budget#!what-it-is>

Budgeting for college students:

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/budgeting/budgeting-tips>

*Also see Education section of this toolkit for Financial Aid for Further Education*

CNN Money has a number of tips and tools:

<http://money.cnn.com/pf/money-essentials/>

Budget calculators that break down the categories:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/business/personalfinance/gradbudgetcalculator.htm> (on right side of screen)

[http://frugalliving.about.com/library/Budget\\_Calculator/bl\\_budgetcalculator.htm](http://frugalliving.about.com/library/Budget_Calculator/bl_budgetcalculator.htm)

For kids, teens, parents and teachers:

<http://www.themint.org/>

## Document Organization

The Red Tree House website has many valuable resources related to record keeping available on their website. From the home page click on "Find Resources". By checking the box for "record keeping" you will find resources, organizations and events related to that topic. Some examples of informative information are: Simply search by checking the box for "record keeping" and you will find resources, organizations and events related to that topic. <http://www.redtreehouse.org/main>

Must have papers list of important papers and information on where and how to organize your information. <http://articles.extension.org/pages/11023/organize-your-important-household-papers:-print-this-lesson>

What to pitch and what to keep is very important. You don't want to have to try and replace important information. You also don't want to have an unnecessary clutter. <http://lifehacker.com/5977082/what-documents-should-i-shred-and-what-should-i-keep>

Emergency Preparedness is key to getting your loved one with special needs critical care in a timely manner and this resource will help make sure you have all the important documents organized so you have one less thing to worry about when an emergency situation occurs.

<https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan?gclid=CNKHu8b2ic8CFUIdaQodV4cM3Q>

## **Estate Planning – One Size Does Not Fit All!**

If you're reading this, you probably have had a life changing experience. Either you, a friend or family member has been impacted by a mental health diagnosis. Estate planning is probably the last thing you are thinking about.

HOWEVER! Even though you might be in crisis mode, you need to breathe deep and stay calm. There are a few documents that can save you headaches later on, if you take a minute to familiarize yourself with them, and a few more that you will want to look at later. The very best scenario is to meet with a professional lawyer who is knowledgeable in dealing with individuals and families affected by disabilities (body and/or mind). The wrong terminology on a legal document can be disastrous! A 6'3" gal would not want to put on "short" pantyhose!

Before we go further, please know that this is a difficult process but one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself or a loved one, is to plan for the hard times.

*This is not legal advice. If you have questions contact an attorney. All information referenced were in effect as of 6/1/2015. Please be aware that the laws may change over time. Changes can be found on the internet.*

### **Documents Needing Immediate Attention:**

Advanced Directives. Ohio State Bar Association and Ohio State Medical Association jointly prepared standardized forms for Living Wills and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. Anyone 18 or older should consider implementing the following documents.

1. Durable Health Care Power of Attorney (POA). You will want to appoint a trusted person (ideally with 2 or 3 alternates named) to make decisions for you in the event you are unable to. If no one is appointed, your future may not go according to your wishes.
2. Living Will. Nutrition & hydration – will they be provided in the event you become permanently unconscious? Documentation will help to ensure your wishes are granted.
3. Do Not Resuscitate (DNR). If you stop breathing and your heart stops, do you want to be brought back, using every resource available to modern science? Someone in constant pain or with a terminal illness might not want to.
4. Durable Financial Power of Attorney. As in the Health POA, a trusted person is named to make financial decisions for you in the event you are unable to (POA's are not affected by disability or lapse of time – however, all POA's expire at death, after which time a death certificate is required by financial institutions).

### **Documents to think about when you are not in crisis:**

1. Last Will and Testament. There are many issues to consider when writing this important document, including: guardianship for a disabled child; financial provision for same; fairness to other siblings, etc. Many choose to discuss this with family members and/or you may consider writing a **Letter of Intent** that more fully explains your wishes. Once again, competent, knowledgeable legal advice can help you decide what is best for your situation.

2. Trusts. Trusts are not just for the wealthy. They specify who, how, and where your assets will be disbursed, regardless of how much you have to leave behind. **Competent legal advice is the only way to go in writing a trust**. This is a case where legal terminology is essential in making sure your intentions are carried out. True Example: father creates trust fund to provide care for disabled son in event of father's death. Son dies before father, and because of bad legal language in the document, all trust funds, instead of reverting back to the father, go to the state. Please see Reference List for more information. The following are different types of trusts.
  - Testamentary Trust
  - Living Trust
  - Revocable Trust – may be amended or revoked
  - Irrevocable Trust – generally may not be amended or revoked.
  - Wholly Discretionary Trust, or Wholly Discretionary 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Trust
  - Supplemental Services Trust
  - Special Needs Trust
  - Medicaid Payback Trust
  - Pooled Medicaid Payback Trust
  
3. Guardianship and Custody (please see link to separate section on Custody)
  - Full or Plenary Guardianship – guardian has authority over everything
  - Guardianship of the Estate – involves only financial matters
  - Guardianship of the Person – involves all matters other than financial
  - Emergency Guardianship – on short notice, court appointed
  - Interim Guardianship – temporary until permanent one is found
  - Limited Guardianship – probate court appoints a guardian over a specific area only; possible example: medical procedures only.

In summary, immediate attention is needed in establishing power of attorney for both health care and financial matters. Decisions made by doctors or probate may not be what you want. Secondly, because the future is uncertain, wisdom dictates planning for the future care of our loved ones, using sound professional counsel in creating the right size legal document for our situation.

Resources:

1. "Estate & Future Planning for Ohioans with Disabilities & Their Families" by David A. Zwyer, Esq. Published by Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, November 2010.
2. Interview with John Frankel, attorney at law, Sandusky, Ohio, April 2015.

## **Ohio Waiver Program**

From Disability Rights Ohio

### **Medicaid Waiver Programs in Ohio**

Medicaid waivers are programs offered through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and the Ohio Department of Aging. Waiver programs provide services to people who would otherwise be in a nursing home or hospital to receive long-term care. There are many factors that determine a person's eligibility for a waiver, such as the type and extent of their disability, the prognosis, and their financial assets. Each waiver provides different types of services.

This section offers general information about waiver programs in Ohio. Contact the agency that administers the waiver to verify the information provided in this section and for more specific information about eligibility, services, and how to apply.

#### Individual Options (IO) Waiver

The Individual Options Waiver (IO Waiver) is for people with developmental disabilities who meet the waiver's eligibility requirements. Services provided through this waiver allow people to stay in their homes and get support rather than living in an Intermediate Care Facility. This waiver is administered by DODD.

#### **Resources from Ohio DODD**

The following links provide more information on eligibility requirements, services provided, and how to apply. You can also contact your [county board of DD](#) for information.

- [Overview of DODD Waivers](#)
- [The Individual Options Waiver Handbook A Guide To: Services and Eligibility \(PDF file\)](#)
- [W is for Waiver \(PDF file\)](#)

#### **Level 1 Waiver**

The Level 1 Waiver is for people with mental retardation or developmental disabilities who meet the waiver's eligibility requirements. Services provided through this waiver allow people to stay in their homes and get support rather than living in an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF/MR). This waiver is administered by DODD.

#### **Resources from Ohio DODD**

The following links provide more information on eligibility requirements, services provided, and how to apply. You can also contact your [county board of DD](#) for information.

- [Overview of DODD Waivers](#)
- [The Level 1 Waiver Handbook \(PDF file\)](#)
- [W is for Waiver \(PDF file\)](#)

## **Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) waiver**

The Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) waiver, administered by DODD, allows individuals with developmental disabilities who receive support on the waiver to direct where and how they receive those services. The SELF waiver is a capped waiver offering a budget of up to \$25,000 for children and \$40,000 for adults.

### **Resources from Ohio DODD**

The following links provide more information on eligibility requirements, services provided, and how to apply. You can also contact your [county board of DD](#) for information.

- [Overview of DODD Waivers](#)
- [Self Empowered Life Funding \(SELF\) waiver press release](#)
- [SELF Waiver](#)

See also LRS' publication: [Self-Empowered Life Funding \(SELF\) Waiver: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **Ohio Home Care Program**

The Ohio Home Care Program offers services through the Ohio Home Care Waiver and Transitions Waiver. The waivers are designed to meet the home care needs of people who have certain medical conditions and/or functional abilities that would qualify them for Medicaid coverage in a nursing home or hospital. This program is administered by ODJFS.

### **Resources from ODJFS**

The following links provide more information on eligibility requirements, services provided, and how to apply. You can also contact your [county department of Job and Family Services](#) for information.

- [Ohio Health Plans - Ohio Home Care](#)
- [Ohio Home Care Waiver](#)
- [Transitions Waiver](#)

## **Difference between Social Security Disability (SSD) and SSI Disability**

In these tough economic times, many people wonder about the different financial assistance they can get from federal and state governments. The Social Security Administration in the United States offers two different types of disability benefits, namely Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits (known as SSD, SSDI or DIB) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the disabled. People often find it a bit confusing to understand the differences between Social Security Disability Benefits and SSI for the disabled. This article explains both these terms and the differences between them.

### Social Security Disability Benefits (SSD, SSDI or DIB)

This is a program managed by the Social Security Administration (federal government) and paid for by the Social Security Trust Fund which is funded by payroll taxes paid on employee wages by the employee and the employer. It is available to those people who have a medical impairment (physical or mental) that keeps them from working AND who are "insured." For people to be "insured" they must have paid Social Security taxes on enough of their wages both throughout their life and recently (as determined by their age). The benefit amount available to each person is dependent on their wages that have been taxed by Social Security and calculated using other variables.

The exact amount of monthly benefits is figured by Social Security using complicated formulas and is best determined by calling the Social Security Administration. People above full-retirement age (currently the age of 66) are not eligible to get SSD benefits and those people should refer to their Social Security retirement benefits or SSI for the aged or disabled.

A disabled individual may also be eligible for SSD benefits based on another person's wage record (the "wage earner"). There are specific categories of people who can claim benefits on another person's wage record such as a spouse, divorced spouse, widow, widower, children age 18 or older who were disabled before the age of 22, and others. There are many restrictions on claiming these benefits which often include important time requirements. If you think you may be eligible you should look into these options as soon as possible.

### Supplemental Security Income for the Disabled (SSI)

This is a program which was created to help those people who are disabled, aged or blind and who do not have enough money or resources to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. SSI is paid for by general Treasury Funds not by the Social Security Trust Fund. The amount an individual can receive is based on financial need (up to a maximum benefit amount set each year), it is not based on the individual's past earnings and Social Security payroll taxes. The maximum monthly benefit amount is set by the federal government each year. In addition, some states pay an additional monthly amount, also based on need. The SSI program is meant for the poorest of individuals and in addition to being disabled the individual must meet the financial eligibility rules such as: the individual's total assets should be lower than \$2,000 if single, if married, the couple's assets should be lower than \$3000; also the individual/couple should have limited income. There are complicated formulas for determining income as some items you receive from others,

such as a free place to live, might be counted as income. Likewise, there are specific items that do not count in the asset calculation (such as a house you own and live in). You should consult with the Social Security Administration to determine whether your circumstances meet the income/asset guidelines for this program.

It is possible to receive both SSD and SSI as long as the individual's SSD income is under the income guidelines.

Similarities between these two programs:

- Individuals can receive benefits on a monthly basis
- The medical definition and determination of disability is the same
- The SSA administers both programs

Differences between these two programs:

- SSD is based on the individual's (or wage earner's) Social Security taxed wages, while SSI is need based
- SSD is supported by payroll taxes, while SSI is supported by general taxes
- SSI recipients can also get medical assistance (Medicaid) immediately (in most states) but SSD recipients must wait twenty-four months after entitlement to disability benefits before receiving medical assistance (Medicare)
- Disabled individuals above full retirement age (currently 66) are not eligible for SSD (they should look at obtaining Social Security retirement) but disabled individuals of any age may qualify for SSI

For more information contact: [info@disabilitybenefitsalliance.com](mailto:info@disabilitybenefitsalliance.com)

## Guardianship

The following is a synopsis of guardianship law - *it is not legal advice*. If you have questions contact an attorney. All Laws and Rules referenced were in effect as of 6/1/2015. Please be aware that the laws may change over time. Changes can be found on the internet.

On March 15, 2015 new rules governing guardianships went into place. The Ohio Attorney General's office has printed a pamphlet, Ohio Guardianship Guide – an overview of the new rules. A complete copy of the rules can be obtained by calling the Attorney General's Office at 1-800-282-0515 or going online to [www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov) and following the prompts to download a copy.

### Who handles guardianships?

- Probate Court - Every County has a Probate Court.  
  
Probate Court handles – Wills, administers estates and trusts, adoptions, marriage licenses, name changes, and guardianships (See Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 2101.24)
- Probate Courts are the superior guardian of those placed in guardianships and is responsible for monitoring guardians to make sure they fulfill their duties.  
(See ORC 2111.50)

### When is a guardianship necessary?

For:

- Health Reasons
- Due to Brain Injury
- Due to Mental Health issues
- Developmental Disabilities
- Children without parents or
- Neglected children
- Financial awards to children

### The Guardian

- A guardian is appointed by the Probate Court to manage and care for the affairs of the minor child or incompetent adult. The minor child or adult is called a "ward".
- A guardian can be a person or – in limited circumstances – an association or corporation.  
See ORC 2111.01
- A limited guardian can be appointed for a short time or for a specific purpose, including as an emergency guardian. (See ORC 2111.01 and 2111.02)

### Types of Guardians

- There are three types of guardian –  
\*Guardian of the person

\*Guardian of the estate

\*Guardian of the person and the estate

### The Guardian as a Fiduciary

The guardian is a fiduciary to the ward. This means the guardian must act on behalf of the ward and take responsibility for protecting the ward's interests. (See ORC 2109.01)

### General Responsibilities of the Guardian

- All guardians have certain responsibilities no matter what type of guardianship.
- All guardians must follow the orders of the Probate Court. (See ORC 2111)
- Guardians must act in the best interests of the ward when making decisions and must make them, whenever feasible – and not harmful – following the wards wishes. (See ORC 2111.50)
- Other responsibilities are determined by the type of guardianship, whether the ward is a minor or adult, and by specific orders of the Court.

### Background and Credit Checks, Bonds and Training

In some counties a guardian must undergo a criminal background check and a credit check, complete a training course and obtain a bond.

### Charging to be the guardian

In some cases a guardian may charge a fee. The fee must be reasonable and approved by the Probate Court before being paid. (See Rule 73 of the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio)

### Conflicts of Interest and Undue Influence

- A guardian cannot be a service provider to the ward.
- A guardian may not have undue influence over a ward. If so accused it is up to the guardian to show the Court this is not the case.

## Medical Care

Once a person turns 18 years old, healthcare providers are required by law to respect the right to confidentiality of personal health information. Health care providers cannot provide this information to parents or others unless they have written permission to do so.

Things you need to know to prepare to take control of your own health care

- 1) Know and understand your diagnosis
- 2) Be prepared to discuss your current symptoms and medical history—a one page summary starting with most recent information
- 3) Prepare a list of your doctors/therapists etc. This should include names, addresses and contact information
- 4) Know your health insurance or other funding information and what is covered
- 5) List of current medications including name, dosage and side effects
- 6) Emergency contact information
- 7) Permission to release information

There are worksheets available to help you organize this information regardless of your diagnosis. Please visit:

[http://autismandhealth.org/?a=pt&p=main&t=pt\\_frm&theme=ltlc&size=small](http://autismandhealth.org/?a=pt&p=main&t=pt_frm&theme=ltlc&size=small) and [www.healthytransitionsny.org](http://www.healthytransitionsny.org)

### Organize medical records

Think about where you (or your youth/young adult) want to store your medical records and who else (family member, close friend or another person) should have a copy—or know where one is kept. Are you comfortable doing it electronically or would you rather keep a paper copy in a drawer, file cabinet, box or binder? How much do you want to spend to set up your personal system (file folders, binders, boxes)? How will you keep your personal information safe—do you need a locked drawer/box, or would you rather a password protected computer file? Can you scan documents that you need to keep or do you need to keep paper copies?

What is your organization style? Do you want to file your records by category/company or by month? That will determine how many files or envelopes you need. Make sure you have a copy of your insurance card/company information with your medical history. Some people prefer to keep information about medical bills with finances others prefer to keep them with medical records.

Then request a copy of your medical records from your physician and/or mental health provider. You may also want to check with hospitals or other agencies where you have received treatment. Some records may not be available for you to remove from the facility—particularly records from addiction treatment. It may be possible for you to review records on site and create your own summary. Be aware that some records you receive may be redacted.

*See Finances and Documentation section of this toolkit.*

## SELF-CARE

What does "self-care" mean to you? There are many aspects of what it is called self-care. To help organize the information it has been broken down into three main categories, the body, the mind, and the soul (or spirit). Remember that self-care means different things to each one of us and it is important for you to understand what self-care means to you.

**BODY (Physical Health):** Below is a list of things that are in this category.

**Basic Hygiene** – This includes regular showering, washing of hands and face, using deodorant, combing your hair, brushing and flossing your teeth, as well as cutting and cleaning fingernails and toenails. You may have additional items you would like to add to those listed.

**Healthy Eating** – What you eat can have an impact on how your body functions and whether you feel physically healthy or not. Limiting certain unhealthy fats, sugar, and salt will help your body function in a more optimal way and help your body fight against disease.

***Avoiding alcohol, cigarettes and abuse of prescription or non-prescription drugs is critical for your physical health.***

**Exercise** – This can be as easy as taking a short walk, cleaning around the house, or dancing. Any activity that requires moving your body will help your physical well-being. Exercises like yoga are healthy for both our physical and emotional health.

**Sleep** – Being able to get a full night's sleep is important to providing your body the rest it needs.

**Regular Doctor/Dentist Appointments** – It is extremely important to keep up your regular visits to your Doctors and your Dentist. It is also important for you to be an active participant in your own health care. Here are some tips.

If you tend to forget your appointments, put a calendar up on a wall with the appointments listed.

If you need assistance with transportation some areas have programs that will provide transportation.

You should have a written health history which includes family health history, previous health conditions, current health conditions, any surgeries, any drug allergies, and what medicines you are currently taking.

Write down questions you want to ask and bring them to your appointment.

Write down any symptoms or side affects you are feeling and bring them to your appointment.

Always bring some identification and an insurance card, if you are covered. Health Insurance is now more available to young adults because of new laws.

*Remember to always take your medications as prescribed. There are different ways to help you remember such as setting an alarm or putting notes on a mirror, wall, or door. You could also make a checklist with each medication and when it should be taken, then make a check mark when you take it so you have a record and know what you have taken and when.*

**MIND (Emotional Health):**

There are things that we can and need to do keep our mind emotionally healthy. A brief list includes reaching out to others for support, learning stress management skills, journaling, finding interests that give you a sense of accomplishment, learning good relationship and positive communication skills.

**SOUL (Emotional Health):**

These are activities that nourish who you are. Some examples are meditation, prayer, practicing mindfulness, giving to and serving others, belief in a higher power.

Remember that self-care is something everyone needs to practice. It is a life-long set of habits and routines. Below are resources to help you learn more about self-care and websites that have 'tools' like trackers and forms to help you take control of your own self-care!

<http://facingus.org>

[http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=wellness\\_personal\\_wellness\\_tools](http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=wellness_personal_wellness_tools)

<http://www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/wellbeing-physical-health>

<http://us.reachout.com/>

<http://mindyourmind.ca/expression/blog/habit-action-list>

## Transitioning from Child to Adult Healthcare

Parents usually help their kids take care of medical needs. We schedule their doctor's appointments, take care of co-pays, pick up prescriptions and get them filled, make sure that insurance and Medicaid are current and track vaccinations. But, when our kids turn 18, we are not allowed access to their medical records or details regarding their health, and we no longer have the legal ability to make decisions for their healthcare unless we are granted access: custody, court order or signed release.

### How do we help our kids get ready to handle their own healthcare?

Some things your child/youth will need to know in order to manage their own healthcare needs:

- 1) Know and understand their diagnosis
- 2) Be prepared to discuss their symptoms and questions
- 3) Prepare a list of their doctors/therapists etc. This should include names, addresses and contact information,
- 4) Know their health insurance or other funding information and what is covered
- 5) Know current medications including name, dosage, side effects and/or allergies to any medication (Hint: take a picture of their prescription bottles and keep it on their phone.)
- 6) Emergency contact information
- 7) Permission to release information to parents or others (this can be revoked at any time)
- 8) Advance Directives (see Estate Planning section)

Transition planning in healthcare can start at any time but needs to be completed by age 18.

Medicaid coverage changes at 18 and Ohio has an expansion under the Affordable Care Act. Also, be aware that Children's Health Insurance Program ends after the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. You can get more information from <http://medicaid.ohio.gov/> or from your local social security office.

Other issues to be considered prior to your child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday:

- This process may take persistence so give yourself plenty of time.
- Until what age can your child/youth stay on your private insurance plan? You can talk with your insurer or visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/get-coverage/> to explore options.
- Will your child/youth need to change doctors? If so, how will the medical records be transferred? How will a new doctor be identified and interviewed if necessary? Will the pediatrician help with the transition?
- How will your child/youth keep track of their appointments, medication, emergency contacts, insurance or Medicaid cards, forms and medical records? ([Try using this list from "My Must Have Papers,"](#) prepared by the University of Massachusetts Medical School.)
- Does your child/youth take medication that needs to be called in every month? If so, you will need to help them devise a plan to get this done. Can your child/youth's doctor help with this process?

While there are a lot of details, planning ahead and starting the work towards transition early will help make the change from child to adult systems much smoother.

Here are some resources to help you get going on this journey:

- [www.gottransition.org/youthfamilies](http://www.gottransition.org/youthfamilies) has some wonderful resources written in family friendly language
- Aspire.org has worksheets available to help you organize the information:  
[www.aaspire.org](http://www.aaspire.org)
- The University of Florida also has a great tool, written for youth to help them in managing their healthcare transition, you can copy and paste the following into your browser to access this document:  
[http://www.hscj.ufl.edu/jaxhats/docs/envisioning\\_my\\_future\\_gray.pdf](http://www.hscj.ufl.edu/jaxhats/docs/envisioning_my_future_gray.pdf)

## Landlord Tenant Law

*The following is a synopsis of Landlord Tenant law - it is not legal advice. If you have questions contact an attorney. All Laws and Rules referenced were in effect as of 8/91/2015. Please be aware that the laws may change over time. Changes can be found on the internet. (See [www.lawwriter.com](http://www.lawwriter.com))*

In Ohio, rentals are governed by the Ohio Landlord-Tenant law (Ohio Revised Code 5321). You need to be familiar with both the rights of the landlord and the rights of the tenant (renter).

The landlord has a duty to have the premises in a fit, habitable condition (think - have the exterminator come before you move in); and keep all common areas (halls, stairways, laundry room, etc.) safe and sanitary. The landlord must have the rental in compliance with all building, housing, health and safety codes; have and keep all electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilations systems in working order; and maintain all supplied (or required) appliances/equipment. Note - some rental units do not come with appliances. If not, the tenant must supply their own appliances.

The landlord must provide running water and hot water and heat in reasonable amounts unless they are under the exclusive control of the tenant and supplied directly by a utility. In other words if your water and heat are included in your rent the landlord must supply them in "reasonable" amounts. If you want the heat at 90 degrees in January so you can wear shorts in the apartment the landlord does not have to supply that amount of heat. If you are paying for your own heat you can set the thermostat as high as your finances allow.

The landlord must provide garbage cans and trash removal if there are four or more units in the same building. A landlord must give at least 24 hour notice - unless it is an emergency - before entering a tenant's unit and even then only at reasonable times and in a reasonable manner. The landlord also has a duty to evict a tenant when law enforcement informs them that a tenant, member of the tenant's household or a tenant's guest is involved with drug activity on the premises.

Which leads us to the duties of tenants. Tenants must keep the premises safe and sanitary; dispose of rubbish properly, and keep plumbing fixtures as clean as their condition permits (you are not expected to remove rust stains, but you are expected to clean the toilet).

The tenant is expected to use electrical and plumbing fixtures properly; comply with health, housing and safety codes; and refrain from anyone living in or visiting the unit from damaging the premises or disturbing neighbors. Tenants must also maintain any supplied appliances in good working order.

The tenant must allow the landlord to enter the unit with proper notice and at a reasonable time. Further, the tenant must follow all federal, state and municipal drug laws in connection with the use of the unit.

Once you are in a rental unit there may be a time when repairs are needed. If there is a serious problem - for instance the roof is leaking or the seal around the window is letting water into your bedroom - these are problems for the landlord to fix. If the landlord refuses

to fix the problem, then the Ohio Landlord-Tenant Law, and possibly local housing codes, goes into effect.

Report all notices of a problem in writing to the landlord. This may be delivered in person or to the place where the rent is normally paid. The tenant should keep a copy of the notice with an indication of the date, time, place and person to which the notice was delivered.

If the condition/problem is not corrected within a reasonable time – but not to exceed 30 days – the tenant may then deposit their rent with the Court; apply for a Court order to compel the repairs; or terminate the rental agreement.

If you have an unresponsive landlord you may have to go to Court. Many people believe that if they have a conflict with their landlord they can just withhold the rent or pay their rent to a local Court until the issue is settled. This is a “yes, but...” area. A tenant cannot just “keep” their rent. Further, they must be current in their rent in order to use a Court escrow account; must pay their rent to the Court in full on or before the due date; and they must follow all local Court rules for using an escrow account.

Further “buts” – if the tenant received written notice from the landlord that he/she owns three or fewer units then the tenant may not take action under the Ohio Landlord Tenant Law. Also, if the landlord fails to disclose his/her name and address - or that of their agents - to the tenant then they have legally waived their right of notice before the tenant takes legal action.

Under a month-to-month rental the landlord must give 30-days' notice before increasing the rent. With a written lease the landlord may not increase the rent during the term. However, at the end of the written lease the rent can be increased. There is no rent control in Ohio.

Late charges for failure to pay the rent on time may be charged; but they may not be “unconscionable”. There are no laws governing deposits to “hold the unit”, applications fees, or a credit check fee. Before giving money for anything concerning the unit get a written statement of the charges and the conditions for a refund. NEVER give money without getting a receipt.

Landlords are prohibited from retaliating against a tenant for complaining to a public official, complaining to the landlord, or joining with other tenants to deal collectively about problems. Landlords are also forbidden to shut off utilities, change locks or seize possessions of a tenant.

For further assistance if there is an issue contact COHHIO at 888-485-7999.

## **Gun Law and Mental Health**

Ohio has no laws requiring the reporting of mental health information to National Instant Criminal Background Check System ("NICS") Ohio requires a probate judge who finds an individual to be a mentally ill person subject to hospitalization by court order to notify the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation ("BCII") of the identity of the individual.

Gun laws are changing. The most up to date information is available at <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/> (There is a search box in the upper right hand corner.)

## Voting in Ohio

Voting is important. As we have mentioned several times throughout this toolkit, laws change with some frequency and the legislators who change those laws are elected by the people who show up to vote. If you want to have a voice in how those laws are changed, what funding priorities are in the local, state and federal budgets, then voting matters.

An individual is eligible to vote in Ohio if they are a US citizen, 18 or older on Election Day, have lived in Ohio for 30 days before the election, are not currently in jail for conviction of a felony, been convicted of violations of election laws and have not been found incompetent to vote. (This is a specific finding and order from a probate judge regarding voting, a person found incompetent for other purposes is not automatically prohibited from voting. If you have questions, ask your attorney or call the election board.)

Call your county board of elections to find out where you can get registered. It can also be printed from the Ohio Secretary of State's website, completed and returned by the voter or someone else, to the county board of elections—keep in mind that this has to be turned in within 10 days completion of the form.

So, what is needed to register? You will need your name, address, county of residence, date of birth; signature or legal mark (that can be made with an assistive or mechanical device); Ohio driver's license number or the last 4 digits of your social security number. If you do not have either, take a current utility bill or other document (like a bank statement, paycheck, or government check) that has your name and address along with a current photo ID card or military ID card. According to Disability Rights Ohio these should be accepted as proof of identity for the purpose of registering to vote. If you need to register by mail, include copies of these documents along with the registration form.

If, you or your youth/young adult do not have a home address, you can use the address of a shelter you use regularly or the address of a friend or family member that you stay with. The address you give determines where you go to vote and where mail will be sent by the board of elections.

The deadline to register is typically one month prior to the election in which you want to vote; for example, if you want to vote in November, plan to have your registration completed and submitted by the first of October. The county board of elections has 20 days to get you registered once they receive your application and they must send you a notice telling you that you are registered (or if you need to provide more information to finish the process.), where you need to go to vote and what identification you need to bring on election day.

If you move or change your name after registering, it's up to you to update the information with the Ohio Secretary of State. This can be done when you update your driver's license or at the new County Board of Elections.

If you have not voted in more than two years, it's a good idea to contact your County Board of Elections to make sure your registration is still active. You can also check at [www.myohiovote.com](http://www.myohiovote.com)

For more information please visit [www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com) . Rock the Vote is designed for youth and young adults. It gives up to date information, motivation and help in understanding issues, get to know candidates and youth friendly apps and more.

[www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) is another good resource for state by state, up to date information

[www.myohiovote.com](http://www.myohiovote.com) lists all the polling places and gives other Ohio-specific information.

If you have problems registering to vote, you can call Ohio Disability Rights at 614-466-7264 or your local Board of Elections.

#### What to expect:

- Have your ID ready. Acceptable forms of ID are: Driver's license, any photo ID that has your current address, any government document that contains your name and address, utility bill listing your name and current address
- Your ID will be examined by the poll workers. You will get it back.
- If you have not voted for some time, your name in the signature ballot may be "flagged" and you may be required to complete a form to verify your address.
- You have the choice to vote by paper ballot, instead of machine, but you must ask for it.
- If you have moved since the last time you voted, you MUST vote in the precinct where you live NOW. Report any address or name changes to the Board of Elections by the registration deadline. This can be done online at <https://olvr.sos.state.oh.us/ovru/Modify.aspx> . If this is not updated by the registration deadline you will have to cast a provisional ballot.

A provisional ballot is a paper ballot that is placed in a special envelope on which you enter the information that is in question (new name, address, Identifying info). After the election, you have 10 days to go to the Board of Elections to confirm the information you put on the envelope. If you do this satisfactorily, your vote WILL then be counted.

Additional reasons to use a provisional ballot are:

1. If you live in the precinct, but your name does not appear in the signature book. Usually this happens when you have moved into the precinct, but did not notify the Board of Elections of you address change.
2. If your name is in the book, but the address is incorrect.
3. If you don't have proper ID with you.
4. You requested an absentee ballot.

Absentee ballots: A registered voter can request an absentee ballot. The deadline for making the request is on your county's Board of Elections website. They will send you an application, you return it, and they will mail your ballot to you. After you mark the ballot, you can return it by mail or drop it off at the Board of Elections office. Absentee ballots are counted within a day or two of the actual elections date.

Early voting: This is a period of time before Election Day when voters can vote in person at their local Board of Elections office. Early voting is being challenged in the courts. Contact your County Board of Elections for more information.

*Laws and procedures change with some regularity so this is for reference only. Please check with the Ohio Secretary of State website <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/> (elections and voting tab) for more information.*

## Driver's License and Mental Health

Driving a motor vehicle could be central to freedom. A driver's license could mean independence and the freedom to travel when they wish. However, both mental health disorders and psychiatric drug treatments can cause changes in perception, information processing and integration that can interfere with the ability to drive safely.

In Ohio, the driver's license application (first-time and renewal) asks an applicant whether he or she "is now or ever has been afflicted with epilepsy" or whether he or she "now is suffering from any physical or mental disability or disease and, if so, the nature and extent of the disability or disease." The law requires that these questions be answered under oath. Applicants who answer yes to either of these questions may be required to have medical/mental health evaluation forms completed. (Here is an example: [Exam Station Request for Statement of Physician \(form BMV 2310\)](#))

When the licensing agency has reason to believe that a driver may be medically unsafe to operate a motor vehicle, either because the driver gave positive answers to medical questions on the license application or because of a report from a medical or legal authority, it may require the individual to have a medical/mental health evaluation. When this happens, a medical/mental health evaluation form is sent to the individual, which must be completed by his or her physician.

The evaluation form may ask the medical/mental health professional:

- The date of the last symptoms or episodes of the condition or, if there have been no episodes
- How long the condition has been under control
- Whether the individual is dependable in taking medication regularly and as instructed
- To give a professional opinion as to whether the individual's condition is presently under sufficient medical control to permit safe operation of a motor vehicle, whether periodic follow-up evaluations should be required, and whether any license restrictions are recommended

Medical evaluation forms are returned to the licensing agency for review and a licensing decision. The form must be returned to the licensing agency within a specific amount of time. Be sure to read the form carefully to see what is required.

If you're unable to get a driver's license it is still a good idea to get a State Photo Identification card since this is helpful when registering to vote, applying for services and many other things necessary for transitioning.

*Information from American Diabetes Association, National Institutes of Health and the Ohio Revised code. Remember that laws can change so use this only as reference. Updates are made regularly at [codes.ohio.gov](http://codes.ohio.gov) and at [www.publicsafety.ohio.gov](http://www.publicsafety.ohio.gov)*

## Transportation

Transportation is an aspect of independence that you will need to remember to plan for in advance. It can be expensive depending on where you live and what your needs are but some communities have special services to assist with planning and costs of transportation.

- You will need to determine what you need, for example, do you need a car for daily travel? Or maybe you only need to travel a few days each month?
- How often do I need to travel? (Daily, weekly, monthly)
- What form of travel is the best for my needs?
- How reliable is this vehicle? Can I count on it to be on time and run correctly?
- Am I able to afford to travel this way?
- Is it safe for me to travel this way? Can I safely get to the vehicle? Can I safely travel on or in this vehicle?

Some forms of travel and things you will need to consider for each type:

Vehicle	Who owns it	What does it cost	Can I safely get to the pick-up spot	Can it take me directly to my destination
Personal/Family Car	Me/my family	Monthly car payment Insurance Gas Drivers License		Yes
Private Vehicle	Friend/Acquaintance	Gas money		Yes
Bus (Schedules Change. Check often.)	Local transit authority	Fee or token for each route		No
Transit Authority Shuttle	Local transit authority	Fee or token for each trip		Yes
Taxi	Taxi Service	Fee is charged for each mile traveled		Yes
Carrier service (handicap van, etc.)	Local Transit Authority or Independently owned	Each service has their own system for charging		Yes
Uber or other private service	Individually owned	Pay in advance		Yes

Always plan extra time to arrive in case your ride is late or you run into traffic. Carrier services, local transit shuttles, and rides from family and friends require advance reservations. Other ride services (bus, taxi and Uber, etc.) may not require a reservation but

you will need to plan extra time in case one is not available right away. If you can, have a back-up plan for getting to important appointments and work.

Any private vehicle you travel in must have current tags and insurance. Don't ride in a vehicle you don't feel safe in.

Ride services and other resources that may help with transportation needs:

*(Not all of these provide transportation, but should be able to direct you to it.)*

Service	Contact	Note:
Local Transit Authority		
Ohio RideShare	<a href="http://ohiorideshare.com/">http://ohiorideshare.com/</a>	
Local NAMI		
Local Family & Children First Council		
County Board of Developmental Disability		
County Mental Health & Recovery Board		
Local or County Board of Health or Health Department		
Local Job and Family Services Department		

CareSource, if that is your medical plan will provide transportation for medical appointments or other medical needs only  
<https://www.caresource.com/members/ohio/ohio-medicaid/benefits-and-services/additional-services/transportation/> or call 1-800-488-0134 (TTY: 1-800-750-0750 or 711) \*If you do not have CareSource, check with your company to see if they provide this service.