



# RISE UP

**A practical guide for  
young advocates with  
disabilities.**



**Disability  
Rights** OHIO

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide was developed by Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) for transition-aged youth from 14 to 21. Throughout this guide, you will find helpful information about situations you may go through as you become an adult. This guide is meant to be read as you need it, so you can feel confident to take on any problems as they come.

If you need more help, you can contact DRO directly. At DRO, our mission is to protect the legal, civil, and human rights of people with disabilities. We provide individual and systemic services that help Ohioans with disabilities advocate on topics like discrimination, abuse and neglect, employment, education, community-based services, and much more. To get help from DRO, you can call us at 614-466-7264 or go online to <https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/intake-form>.

## MOVING AROUND

You can quickly find the pages you need by using the table of contents, which is located on the third page of this document. The table of contents lists the subject areas in bold, pink font, then lists the titles and page numbers in that section. Page numbers are on the bottom right side of each page in this booklet.

## SECTION TYPES

In each topic, there are two kinds of pages featured in this book. Each topic has a laminated half page then full-size pages. The half-page has quick tips on the topic, a related activity on the back, and a QR code that links to related resources. The full-size pages are the main readings for each topic. Here is what to expect from each:

### QUICK TIPS

The quick tips will always come first in each section, and these are made to take with you when you need to advocate for yourself. Quick tips are brief summaries of each topic. These are helpful if you want to review or if you are in a hurry.

### RESOURCES

On the same page as the quick tips, there is a QR code that links to more resources to learn or get help with. There is a full list of resources on our website at [www.disabilityrightsohio.org/youth\\_self\\_advocacy](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/youth_self_advocacy). You can also scan this QR code below to be taken to the full list:

Scan me!



## **PREPARE OR PRACTICE ACTIVITIES**

On the other side of a section's quick tips, there is an interactive activity that helps you practice what you've learned or prepare to advocate for yourself. Each activity has text boxes or check boxes that you can check with a dry erase marker. Then, you can use the activity again the next time you need it. You also should be careful not write any of your private information such as your Social Security Number.

## **MAIN READING**

The main reading is comes right after the half-page, and these sections have text and graphics that explain a topic.

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# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: General Advocacy

- 1. Decide** what you want, then write down the steps it will take to get there
- 2. Find information** about the steps it will take to get to your goal
- 3. Know your rights and responsibilities.** If you aren't sure, you can check the Internet or call DRO.
- 4. Find support** by talking to a person who has had the same issue you are having.
- 5. Find a solution** in the way that works best for you
- 6. Speak up** for yourself, and **listen** to what others have to say.
- 7. Keep track** of important information with a system that works for you.
- 8. Practice** speaking up by talking with people you trust; it will get easier with time!



PLAN.



RESEARCH.



PRACTICE.

## QUICK TIPS

Disability Rights Ohio

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PRACTICE: S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Making a detailed plan is helpful for meeting your advocacy goals. Use the questions below about SMART goals to write down the important pieces of your goal.

## **SPECIFIC**

*What are the specific details of your goal? Think of what you want to accomplish, how you will do it, and why.*

## **MEASURABLE**

*How can you measure your progress, and how do you know you are done?*

## **ACHIEVABLE**

*How can you realistically meet the goal? Is it possible to achieve with the time and resources you can use?*

## **RELEVANT**

*How does the goal match your interests and needs? Is it relevant to your life?*

## **TIME-BOUND**

*When do you plan to meet your goal? How quickly will you need to complete steps to be on time?*

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: General Advocacy Tips

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**Self-Advocacy** means learning how to speak for yourself and having a say in what happens in your daily life. It means knowing your rights and how to get information so that you can help to resolve problems in your life. Self-advocacy skills will help you be a part of the decisions that are being made about your life by your family, teachers, bosses, caseworkers, and others, and will help you make your own decisions about your life.



**Learning how to speak up for yourself can be easier if you follow this advice:**



**Make a plan.** Decide what you want and what you need to do to get it. It's good to write down your goal and the steps you need to take to get there. For example, you might want to get your driver's license. Getting a license requires learning the rules of driving, practicing driving skills, and taking a driving test. You will need a plan that helps you work your way through these steps.

**Get information.** You will need to get information so that you can understand what you need to do to advocate for yourself. In the driver's license example, you would need to get information about the process of getting a license, help you will need (including someone to help you practice driving), where to take the test, and how much the process will cost. Information you need to get will be different depending on what you are advocating for.



**Know your rights and responsibilities.** In most situations, you will have rights, and you will have responsibilities. For example, in a job, you will have the right to get paid, but in order to get paid, you will be responsible for showing up on time and doing your job well. Your rights and responsibilities will be different depending on the situation. It's important that you get this information. You can get this information by talking to someone in charge, asking your family or friends, and by using the Internet. A great way to get this information is to talk with someone who has already gone through the situation.

**Find support.** Everyone can use support in getting through life. Support can come from many different people. Family and friends can provide support. Your teacher can provide support. It's important to find the right support for your situation. Generally, you can speak to the person in charge of a situation to ask for help including help learning about the situation or resolving a problem. One of the best ways to get support is to speak to a person who has had the same issue you are having. They could provide you with good ideas for resolving your problem, especially if they were able to resolve



theirs.



**Solve problems.** There are usually many ways to resolve a problem, and you should decide which way works best for you. Some people like to resolve a problem directly by talking to someone. Other people like to write emails or letters to try to resolve a problem. Other people like to have support when they try to resolve a problem. All of these styles of problem solving can work. The only style that doesn't work is doing nothing.

**Listen and learn.** Speaking up is important, but listening is too. If you listen to others in a respectful way, chances are they will listen to you too. Be friendly but firm in telling others what you want and need. Stay calm. If you get anxious or feel yourself getting angry, ask to take a break and then come back to the discussion when you are feeling better.

**Be organized.** Good self-advocacy means you will need to keep track of a lot of information. This includes the information you collect about your problem, possible solutions, and your rights and responsibilities. It also includes contact information for people you need to call, and addresses of places you need to go. The more information you have, the easier it will be to solve your problem and for people to help you.

**Good self-advocacy means you will need to keep track of a lot of information**

You can stay organized by keeping each kind of paper in separate folders. Using a calendar is a good way to stay organized. You can use it to keep track of appointments and also to keep track of things you did on a particular day. You may also have a phone that can help you stay organized.

Use the notes or calendar section to keep you organized, and make sure you save important texts or emails that you might need to review.

**Practice.** It might seem scary to speak up, but practicing it can make it easier. You can practice with friends who have solved a problem, or you can practice with a teacher, caseworker or other person. **With practice, you will find that speaking up just means knowing what you want, telling others why, and getting other people to help you.**

**Here's how you can use the advice above:**

For example, if you want to take a class in school that the teacher says you are not ready for, this is what you can do:

**Plan** for your next steps. These could include **asking** the teacher for more **information** about what she thinks you are not ready, and asking the teacher to **help** you reach your goal by providing you more help.

**Find a classmate** who has had the **same problem** and ask them what they did to resolve it. **Reach out** to a guidance counselor or other adult in the school who can help you communicate with the teacher and **find solutions** to the problem.

**Listen** to all the advice you can get, and use it to work things out with the teacher. **Keep track** of all of the information you get in case you need it to **keep advocating**.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14 - 21: Working with your School District

**Reach out** for help, and **figure out** the right person to talk to. This will be the person most directly able to help you like a teacher, principal, or your special education coordinator

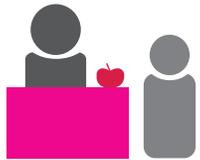


**Speak up** for what you want, and **advocate** for yourself. If you need help with this skill, your school may have clubs that can help you practice

**Fix problems** by first talking to your team. Your school or the Ohio Department of Education can help you file a complaint about problems you cannot resolve

**Stay organized** with your papers in a way that works for you. This can be through a folder or electronic way. It is also important to stay organized with your thoughts.

**Decide** what you want to say before you say it.



**REACH OUT.**



**SPEAK UP.**



**ORGANIZE.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PRACTICE: Solving Problems

Trying to solve big issues can be overwhelming. Sometimes, it helps to work through a problem before making big decisions. Use the questions and space below to help find solutions to a problem:

Describe the problem and your goal for solving it:

Describe what might be causing the problem:

What are some ways you could fix the causes?

1.

2.

Who could you ask to help you with this problem?

**NAME**

**CONTACT INFO**

1.

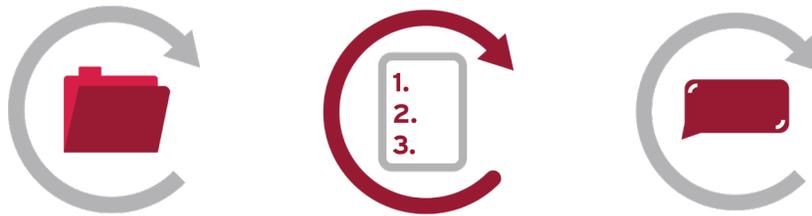
2.

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Working with Your School District

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**Tip: All of your education is leading to your future.  
Make the most of it!**



Your school district must provide you with educational services and supports that meet your unique needs if you qualify for special education. **Special education** includes extra supports for students with disabilities such as help from a specially trained teacher, therapies to help with physical and communication problems, and transition services to help you get a job or get into college. The services you get from your school should support your future goals.

If you are aged 14-22, you can get extra support from your school to help you get as prepared as possible to leave high school and move toward a meaningful job. These are called **transition services**. Transition services are important to your future. They can help you get prepared to work by helping you learn how to apply for a job or get short-term jobs (like summer and other temporary jobs) to give you practice in getting and keeping a long-term job. Transition services can also help you go to college by making sure you have the right classes in high school, helping you understand what extra help you can get in college, helping you find a college that is right for you, and helping you prepare for any college entrance exams. Transition services can also help teach you skills you will need to live on your own.

### How can I get started?

You might already have an individualized educational program (IEP) or 504 plan. Those are the two kinds of plans that provide special education services. If you don't have an IEP or 504 plan, you should contact your school district's special education department to ask them to start the process of finding out if you can get an IEP or 504 plan. This process involves doing tests of your disability and needs.

If you already have an IEP or 504 plan, you should ask to meet to discuss your services and supports. You can ask for a meeting at any time, but if you are aged 14 and up, you should ask for a meeting to talk about transition services, especially if you don't know about your transition plan, or if you think your transition plan is not helpful to you.

## How can I reach out for help?

You should reach out to people who can help you. It's important to reach out to the right person. For example, if you are having a problem in a class, talk with the teacher of that class first to try to fix the problem. If your problem is bigger than the classroom, you can reach out to the principal of the building. Contacting the principal can help you fix bigger issue, like attendance problems, or issues about credits. If you are having problems specifically about your IEP or 504 plan, or transition services, you should reach out to your special education coordinator. This person is usually the person who leads your team meetings, but if you don't know how it is, ask.

## How do I speak up for what I want?

Having the skills to speak up and advocate for yourself will help you in all areas of your life. It will help you get the most out of your education, your job, and more. If you already know how to speak up, great! If you need help in this area, you can ask

**Having the skills to speak up and advocate for yourself will help you in all areas of your life.**

for support and training on self-advocacy to be added to your IEP/504 plan. You can also ask to participate in clubs and activities in school that can help you learn these skills. Examples are debate club or theater. Both help you learn the skill of speaking in front of others.

When it comes to transition planning, your opinion about what transition goals and services are right for you is the most important opinion. It's so important that the law requires that your school invite you to transition planning meetings. You should speak up at these meetings about your life goals, including what you want to do after you graduate from high school. You should also let your school know that you want to be invited to and attend these meetings.

## How do I fix problems?

The best way to fix a problem is to talk to the right person. But sometimes talking to that person is not enough to resolve the issue. Your next best step is to ask for a meeting of your IEP or 504 team to try to resolve the problem. This can be helpful because there are many people on your team who may have ideas that you have not thought about. If the team is unable to fix the issue, there are other things you can do. Your school and the Ohio Department of Education have procedures you can use to file a complaint about a problem that you cannot resolve. You can ask your team to explain the procedures to you, or you can read about them on your school website or the Ohio Department of Education's website.



## How can I stay organized?

Good self-advocacy requires you to be organized. This includes knowing the facts of your situation, having copies of important paperwork that you need to refer to, and keeping track of things that happen. You should find a way to keep copies of important papers. You might get a folder that you can use to store all of the papers, or you might use your phone to take pictures of the important papers. If you have a computer, you can also store papers electronically. There are many ways to stay organized. The important thing is to find a way that works for you and use it.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It's important that you are organized in your thoughts before you try to speak up for yourself. It can help to write things down as a reminder of what you want to say, or what you want to ask for. An easy trick is to write a list of the things you want your school to do for you. When you are in a meeting with your IEP or 504 team, you can use the list to remind you of what you want to say, and you can check off the items on the list as they are discussed. You can use extra space on your list to take notes about what the team decided.

**There is no one right way to solve a problem.**

## **What are some examples about problems and solutions?**

You might experience some difficulties when trying to advocate for yourself. This is common. A good way to get around the difficulties is to think of different ways to solve the same problem. There is no one right way to solve a problem. If you are having a problem, chances are that someone else has had the same problem. For example, here are some common problems people need to resolve and some ways to resolve them.

### **My school won't respond to my requests**



You might have called your school to request a meeting, but the school did not get back to you. One of the best ways to handle this problem is to put your request in writing. Sending an email or letter to your school documents your request and proves when you made the request. The school will be much more likely to respond to you if you put your request in writing. Remember to date your request so that you can prove when you sent it.

### **I don't get along with someone on my IEP/504 team**

We all have times when we have to work with someone we don't like. It's a natural part of working with lots of people. We also usually really like some members of our team. There are many ways to try to resolve the problem of not getting along with one member of the team. If you feel you can, the best way to fix this problem is to talk with that person to see if you can come to an agreement on how to best talk with each other. If that doesn't work, you can ask someone on the team to support you when you are talking with that person. It's generally not the best choice to ask that person to leave your team or meeting. Part of becoming a good self-advocate is learning to work with different people and personalities.



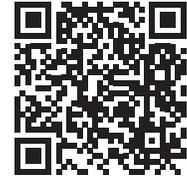
### **I don't understand some of the things my school talks about at IEP/504 meetings**



This happens to everyone. You do not have to be an expert in special education. Your job is to know what is right for you and to speak up at meetings about what you want and what will help you succeed. Your team members should explain what is happening in meetings in a way that makes sense to you. One of the hardest self-advocacy skills is to speak up to say you don't understand something. Many people feel embarrassed to do this. But it is very important to speak up when you don't understand something because you need to know what the school is saying to make good decisions about your education.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Succeeding in Education After High School

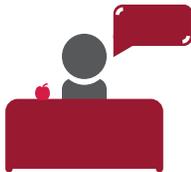
Education after high school can be very different than your education up until now. Now, you are responsible for requesting the help you need in order to succeed in school. For example, as a college student, you may need to:



- Tell people about your disability in order to get help
- Determine what help you will need to be successful
- Figure out how to manage college life
- Stop relying on your parents or other adults to advocate for you
- Talk to your school directly; your college must talk to you - not your parents - about most of what happens at college
- Know what rights and responsibilities you have when asking for accommodations



**PREPARE.**



**TALK.**



**LEARN.**

 **QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

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# PREPARE: Your Rights and Responsibilities

As a student after high school, you have more responsibilities than you probably had during high school. Even with the added responsibilities, you will still have specific rights that you should know about. Use the questions below to get a better sense of how much you already know & how much you need to find out:

Does your school have a handbook? Have you read it?

Have you reached out to the Office of Disability Services at your school? If not, how can you get that process started?

Do you know what rights you have and how to advocate for them? If not, where can you find that information?

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## **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Tips to Succeed in Education After High School**

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Getting help in college or after high school is different than getting help before you graduated high school. When you leave high school you will not have an IEP or a team of people helping to make decisions about your education. You will need to make decisions yourself. You should learn as much as you can about how to get what you want after high school.

### **Do I need to tell people about my disability to get help?**

Before you graduated from high school, your school had to give you help to do your classwork through an IEP or 504 plan, even if you didn't ask for it. In college, you need to ask for the help. To ask for help, you must tell people about your disability by registering with your school's Office of Disability Services. You will have to give the Office of Disability Services information about your disability and what you need. If you have a copy of your ETR, IEP or 504 plan from high school, you can use that to show the college about your disability and need for help. It is important for you to know how to explain your disability, and what you can do well and what you need help with to your college professors, advisors, and disability services office.

### **How can I determine what help I need?**

In college, you may not be able to get the same help you were given in high school. If you do not know what help you need, you can talk with your college's Office of Disability Services about the kinds of help your college may give. Sometimes your high school records might have information about what has worked for you that you might be able to get in college. You can talk to other students with disabilities at the college about the kinds of help they are getting. Or, you can talk to adults with disabilities who were successful in college about the help they got from their schools.

**It is your  
responsibility  
to get help for  
your disability.**

It is your responsibility to get help for your disability. You may have to advocate for yourself with professors and support staff to get what you need.

### **How can I manage college life?**

A great way to learn about college life is by joining a support group for students with disabilities on your campus, or start one! Peer support is important to have as you can learn from each other. It's also important for you to learn how to balance school and spending time with your friends. If you are struggling with school work, ask for help right away. Most colleges offer some type of tutoring services. If you are lonely or need help making friends, get involved in an activity on campus. It's a great way to meet people and develop social skills. If you are having a hard time at college,

then ask for help by seeing a professional in the counseling center on campus. A good place to get help is from the college's Office of Student Affairs.

### **Can I rely on my parents or other adults to advocate for me?**



No. To be successful in college you need to become comfortable with asking for help and how to make decisions for yourself. At age 18, you are an adult and now are expected to communicate your needs and wants. This is part of self-advocacy. At college this means being able to talk to professors, disability service providers, persons in career or counseling services, other students, and others.

### **Does my college have to talk to me - not my parents - about most of what happens at college?**

Yes! It's important that you learn to advocate for yourself. You should start to learn to self-advocate before you turn 18. You can practice this by participating in your IEP meetings, participating in extra-curricular activities in high school, and talking to your teachers, parents, and friends about what they do to advocate for themselves.

### **How can I learn about my rights and responsibilities?**

Every college and university should have a Student Handbook. It is important for you to read and understand this handbook because it says what your rights and responsibilities are as a student. It can also tell you what to do if you are not getting what you need from your school.



# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21:

## Help With Getting and Keeping a Job

You can get help getting or keeping a job through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD).



**Eligibility:** You might be eligible if you have a physical, mental, or intellectual disability that makes it hard for you get or keep a job, and you need vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help you work.

**Types of Help:** You can get help with things like evaluation of and treatment; job preparation, like getting internships or learning about what jobs are available; finding a job; to keep learning after high school (like help paying for college); transportation or equipment

**Process:** You would apply online on OOD's website or by calling 1- 800-282-4536. If you are eligible, you will get a counselor that will help you set up an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Then you will get help meeting your goals through your IPE. Make sure to bring important documents to meetings, such as a letter from your doctor and your license or ID card.



**PLAN.**



**MEET.**



**WORK.**

**QUICK TIPS**

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614-466-7264

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## **PRACTICE:** Meeting with your OOD Counselor

What do you want to talk with your counselor about?

What do you need to bring to the meeting? Will you be bringing a friend or family member to help you advocate for yourself?

What are your goals for the meeting?

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## **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Help with Getting and Keeping a Job**

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Thinking about your future and what type of work you may want to do can be hard when you have a disability. The good news is that you can get help from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. OOD is a state agency and its VR program can help you if you have a disability and need help finding or keeping a job.

### **What help can I get?**

OOD's services and supports are available in all 88 counties in Ohio. OOD will work with you to find out what help you need. All services are to help you get ready for, get, or keep a job.

### **GETTING HELP**

#### **Some examples of services you can get are:**

- Evaluation of and treatment for your disability;
- Services to help you prepare for getting a job, like internships or learning about what jobs are available;
- Help looking for and finding a job;
- Help to keep learning after high school (like help paying for college);
- Help with transportation to and from a job;
- Equipment you might need to do a job.

### **How do I know if I'm able to get OOD's help?**

You can get OOD's help if you have a physical, mental, or intellectual disability that makes it hard for you get or keep a job, and you need VR services to help you work.

### **How do I get help?**

You can start online by visiting [www.oodworks.com](http://www.oodworks.com). On this site you can answer questions to help you decide if VR services are right for you. If you think VR services are right for you, you will make a profile and apply for services. You can also apply by phone at your local OOD field office by visiting [www.OOD.Ohio.Gov](http://www.OOD.Ohio.Gov) or calling **800-282-4536**.

You can also apply by asking for help from programs in Ohio that help people get

OOD services. These program are Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP), OOD's Partnerships with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). For more information about how to apply with help from one of these programs, see resources section. If you are not sure which way to apply, a good way to start is by calling Ohio's CAP program at **1-800-282-9181**. Someone can talk with you and help you decide the best way to start.

After you apply, you will be given a counselor. You will have to meet with your counselor to see if you can get services from OOD. If you are able to get services, OOD will help you decide what job you want and write your **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**. This plan is like an IEP that you had in school, but instead of listing help you need in school, it lists help you need to work.

The IPE is very important in the VR process. It lists important information about the job you want (job goal), the services you need to reach your job goal, and the services your counselor agrees to give you. You will have 90 days to work with your counselor to decide what your job goal is and the services you need to find and keep that job. During the 90 days, you may need to work with an OOD provider to help you and your counselor agree on a job goal and the services you need.



It is a good idea to learn about jobs that you might want to have and what you need to be able to do to get and keep that job before you apply to OOD. You can read about jobs online by searching for jobs in an area of interest to you. For example, if you like animals, you can search for “jobs working with animals” and you will find many jobs that might interest you. If you learn about jobs first, you will be better prepared to talk with your counselor about what job you want to do.

### **Who can I call if I need help getting OOD services or with any problems with OOD?**

Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP) is at Disability Rights Ohio (DRO). DRO's CAP team can give you information about VR services and help if you: cannot get VR services, don't like your counselor, are not happy with the services you are getting, do not agree with a decision to close your case, and other problems with VR services.

To receive help from CAP, you can call DRO's Intake Department by phone Monday through Friday at **(800) 282-9181** option 2, or online at [www.disabilityrightsohio.org/intake-form](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/intake-form).

### **How can I get what I need from OOD?**

**Bring Information:** When you meet with OOD for the first time or you are reapplying, you will want to bring the following documents to help your counselor decide if you can get VR services faster.

- A letter signed by your doctor explaining your disability. Have your doctor explain why your disability makes it hard for you to get or keep a job and what you need to help you work. This information is important for VR to decide if you get services.

- State ID, driver's license and/or Social Security card
- SSI or SSDI award letter stating how much you are getting (if this applies to you). If you cannot find the award letter, contact Social Security at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or 800-772-1213 or visit your local Social Security office and get a copy sent to you.
- Paperwork of a criminal record of any kind (if this applies to you). Even if you have a list of any charges or convictions, this will help.

**Know your rights and responsibilities:** At your first meeting with OOD, you will get a document called "Applicant and Eligible Individual Rights and Duties." It is very important for you to read and keep this document because it tells you what your rights are, what you have to do to keep getting VR services, and what you can do if you don't like something OOD did. If you have any questions about your rights and responsibilities, you can ask to speak with the supervisor assigned to your case at OOD or Disability Rights Ohio at **800-282-9181**, Option 2.

**Request an Appeal:** If you do not like your VR services, you can request an appeal by emailing [appeals@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:appeals@ood.ohio.gov) or by writing to:

Executive Director, OOD  
400 E. Campus View Blvd.  
Columbus, OH 43235

**Have a Friend, Parent, or Advocate attend your VR meetings:** It is always a good idea to have someone with you in the room or on the phone during meetings with your counselor or OOD provider. This person can write down what happened at meetings and can help you advocate for what you need from OOD.

### How can I make decisions about the help I want?

You have the right to informed choice. Informed choice means that you must be an active and full partner in the VR process. You must have the chance to make decisions about your job goal, the help you want, and how VR works for you. To make good decisions, VR must give you information and support so that you understand the process and what services you can get and how they can help you. If you don't understand something, ask your counselor to explain it to you in a way that makes sense. You must understand what you are agreeing to and what help VR is providing to you before you can make an informed choice.

#### TIP

##### To advocate for yourself you can:

1. Ask for a copy of the policy the counselor's decision is based on,
2. Ask to speak with the counselor's supervisor;
3. Ask to speak with the Area Manager;
4. Contact DRO to receive help from a CAP team member; and/ or
5. Request a copy of your appeal rights to file an appeal.

Sometimes your counselor won't agree with your informed choice. When that happens, you may not get the VR services you think you need unless you advocate for yourself.

### **What can I do if I am I being treated unfairly?**

If you feel you are being or have been treated unfairly by your counselor or an OOD provider, then you may file a complaint with OOD's Division of Human Resources, Equal Employment Opportunity office by calling **1-800-282-4536**. You may also contact the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. More information is located online at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr>.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Guardianship and Supported Decision-Making

**Guardianship** is when a court chooses someone to make decisions for another person. A guardian can be a family member, friend, or someone else you know. Not everyone who needs help making decisions needs a guardian, and it can be hard to end a guardianship once it is started. This is why **alternatives to guardianship** are important to consider. These alternatives let you get help with making decisions without a guardian.

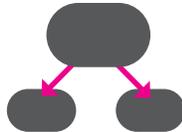


**Supported decision-making** is a plan that lets you make their own decisions by choosing people to help you make these decisions. For example, you can choose one person to be your **authorized representative**. This person can make decisions about certain benefits like food assistance, housing assistance, and healthcare.

If you have a hard time making decisions about your goals, job, or school, practicing making these choices can make it easier!



**PREPARE.**



**PRACTICE**



**CHOOSE.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PRACTICE: Decision-Making

Decision making can be more than just big decisions: making smaller decisions can help you feel more confident making bigger decisions later. Use the activity below to think more about the good and bad effects of a choice.

**What do you need to make a choice about?**

**What is one choice you could make in the situation above?**

**What are the good reasons to make this choice?**

**What are the bad reasons to make this choice?**

**What is another choice you could make in the situation above?**

**What are the good reasons to make this choice?**

**What are the bad reasons to make this choice?**

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Guardianship and Supported Decision Making

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Becoming an adult is filled with exciting and sometimes scary new experiences and decisions to be made. As a child, your parent(s), guardians, or care providers make the choices about your health, your housing, and your money. When you become an adult, those decisions become your own and some people need extra help to make the best decisions. Sometimes people are not able to make decisions even with help. When that happens, a Court will choose another adult to make decisions for them. This is called **Guardianship**.

As you get closer to becoming an adult, it is important to work with your support system to determine what options work best for you and your family or situation, and look for ways you can have the help you need without a guardian.

### What is guardianship?

Guardianship is when a court chooses someone to make decisions for another person. A guardian can be a family member, friend, or someone else you know. A guardian can also be someone you have never met, like a lawyer or organization. A guardian will make important decisions like where a person lives, who they can see, where they can work, and where they get health care. Because a guardianship means that you will not be able to make your own decisions, you should ask what else you can try before you get a guardian.

### How do I get guardianship?

Someone has to show a court that you need a guardian because you can't make decisions for yourself. This usually means that the person will have to go to court and talk to the judge about why they think you need a guardian. If this happens to you, you will get a letter telling you that you can come to court too and that you can ask for a lawyer to help you.

### Do I need a guardian?

Many people with disabilities do not have or need a guardian because they can make decisions for themselves. But, if you need a little help making decisions, there are many other ways to get that help instead of guardianship. These are called **alternatives to guardianship**. Once you get a guardian, it is hard to end a guardianship. So, it is important to know about alternatives to guardianship because they can help you keep your right to make your own decisions.

### What does supported decision-making help with?

One example of an alternative to guardianship is **supported decision-making**. Supported decision-making is a plan that allows people with disabilities to make their own decisions by choosing people to help them. If you use supported decision-making,

you will pick trusted people like family, friends, providers, and others to support you. The support people agree to help you to understand, consider, and communicate your decisions. There are other things you can use along with supported decision-making to help you. For example, you can ask one of your support people to be your **authorized representative** for benefits you may get like food assistance, housing assistance, or health care. An authorized representative helps you manage your benefits and helps fix any problems you have with your benefits.

### **Should I start thinking about supported decision-making early?**

Decision-making gets easier with practice. Even small decisions like what to eat, where to visit, and what to wear are helpful for practicing decision-making skills. One way to practice decision-making is at your IEP meetings/504 meetings if you are in special education. You can ask your school to come to your IEP/504 meetings and tell your team what you think you need in school. You can also ask your school for copies of documents the IEP/504 team will look at during the meeting so you can read those documents and be ready to talk about them. You can also decide if you want someone to come with you to your IEP meeting in addition to your parent. This person could be a provider or other person who knows you well.

When you turn 14, your school must invite you to IEP meetings to talk about what you will do after high school. This is a great time to tell your team your goals after high school, including if you want to go to college, get a job, or where you want to live. All of these are ways to practice decision-making. The more prepared you are to talk about what you want in life, the more likely you are to get others on your team to agree with your choices.

**Decision-making gets easier with practice** You can practice decision-making in a lot of different parts of your life. For example, if you get services from your county board of developmental disabilities, you can ask to go to your ISP meetings to talk to your team about your goals and what you think you need. (See [Working with Your County Board of Developmental Disabilities](#)). If you get services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities you can ask to go to your IPE meetings and talk about your job goal and what you need to be able to work. (See [Help with Getting and Keeping a Job](#))

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

## 14-21: Working with Your County Board of DD

- **Work with your county board to make a plan** - Your County Board will help you make a plan called an **Individual Service Plan (ISP)**
- **Make sure your plan is right for you** - You can meet with your **Services and Support Administrator (SSA)** to talk about any changes to your plan or goals.
- **Get help to pay for things you need** - You can get assessed for a “waiver” which will help you pay for any services you need.
- **Make sure you are ready to explain your disability and need for help** - If you get a waiver assessment, you will need to show how you need help. You might want to organize documents from your doctors or providers to help show this.
- **What if you don't like the county board's decision?** - If you don't like the board's decision you can file a Medicaid **appeal**. That means that someone else will look at the decision to review it.
- **What if you don't like your SSA?** You can talk with your SSA or a trusted friend about the issue. You can also ask your county board for a new SSA.



**PLAN.**



**ORGANIZE.**



**TALK.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

## **PRACTICE:** Meeting With Your Services and Support Administrator (SSA)

What do you want to talk with your SSA about?

What do you need to bring to the meeting?

What are your goals for the meeting?

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Working with your County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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### Get the services and supports you need to help you in your community!

A **developmental disability** is a disability you were born with or that you got before you turned 22 years old. Examples are autism, Down Syndrome, and cerebral palsy, but there are many other developmental disabilities. If you have a developmental disability, you can get help from your county board of developmental disabilities. **County boards** are there to help you find the services and supports you need to live a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life. A person called a **service and support administrator** (SSA) will help you figure out what services you need. This SSA works for the county board. Your county board is in the county where you live.

### How can I work with my county board to make a plan?

**GOAL**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you are already working with your county board, you may have an **Individual Service Plan** (ISP). An ISP lists the supports, activities, and resources you need to reach your personal goals. For example, if you have a goal to work in the community but you do not have a way to get from your home to your job, your ISP would include your need for transportation to work.

If you do not already have an ISP, you should call your county board and ask them if you can get one. Your county board will let you know if you can get one, and help you write your ISP that includes the supports you need.

### How can I make sure my plan is right for me?

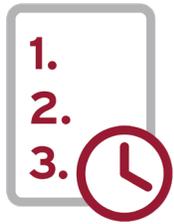
You and your SSA should meet regularly to talk about your ISP. Your ISP will say how often these meetings should happen, but you can request a meeting at any time. You should ask for a meeting if your goals have changed, your needs have changed, or your current ISP is not meeting your needs. You can request a meeting by contacting your SSA.

It is a good idea to prepare for any meetings you have with your SSA. You can prepare by reading your ISP and making a list of things that you want to keep, and things you want to change about your ISP. You can also bring someone to the meeting to support you like a parent or friend. Also, bring any paperwork or person who can tell the SSA about what you need.

### How can I get help paying for things I need?

Your county board may also help you pay for things you need. Sometimes the money used to pay for services comes through a waiver. **Waivers** help people to live in their

homes instead of an institution or facility like a nursing home or hospital. You don't need a waiver to get help from your county board, but sometimes more services are available to you if you have a waiver.



It is not always easy to get a waiver. Your county board may not have enough waivers for everyone in your county who needs one. You may not meet all the requirements to get one. Even so, if you need (or think you need) help paying for your services, you should contact your county board and ask for a waiver. They will probably tell you that you need a **waiting list assessment**. The assessment means that the county board will ask you questions to find out how much help you need. This will help the county board decide if you can get a waiver and how long you will

need to wait to get one.

You should ask for an assessment in writing if you can, so you can keep a copy of your request. Keeping a copy of your request is important because that will be a record of when you asked for the assessment. Even if you have already had a waiting list assessment (or have a waiver) you can request a new assessment if your needs or circumstances have changed.

### How can I get ready to explain my disability and need for help?

After you have asked for a waiting list assessment, you should get ready for the assessment. You can do that by reviewing the Waiting List Assessment Tool that your county board will use to ask you questions about your needs. You can ask your SSA for a copy of the tool.

### Sometimes we try to hide our needs and struggles. The assessment is not the time to do this!

At the assessment you should be prepared to explain what you need to help you through your worst days. Sometimes we try to hide our needs and struggles. The assessment is not the time to do this! Your county board cannot find

out what you need unless you are completely honest about what those needs are. You should also give your county board documents that show your needs. For example you could ask your doctor to write a letter explaining why you need waiver services. Or you could ask your current service provider to write a letter explaining your regular routine. If you know someone who has had an assessment, you can ask that person what it was like and what they did to prepare.

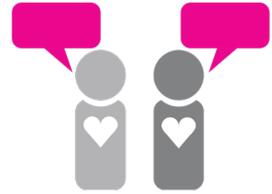
### What if I don't like the county board's decision?

Sometime you may not like a decision your county board makes about your services. If those services are Medicaid services, or about your waiver or waiting list assessment, you can file a **Medicaid appeal**. An appeal is a way that you can have someone else look at the county board's decision to see if it was right. Make sure you read any papers that you get from your county board about your right to appeal because it will tell you how to file an appeal and by what date. If you don't ask for an appeal by the date on your paperwork, you may not be able to appeal the county board decision. You can find more information about Medicaid appeals in the Medicaid section of this Guide.

## What if I don't like my SSA?

You may not like your SSA. That is okay! There could be many reasons. They may have said something that you did not like, or you do not think that they answer your questions fast enough. Whatever your reason, it is okay and normal not to get along with every person on your support team.

There are many ways to try to fix this problem. One way is by talking about your concerns with the SSA. You could also ask a trusted friend or family member to help you talk to the SSA. If that does not work, you can contact your county board and ask them for a different SSA. Just because you ask for a new SSA does not mean the county board must give you a different one. You may also be able to file a complaint with your county board. You can ask your county board about how to file a complaint.



# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Social Security Benefits

**Social Security Benefits** (money) are to help you pay for things like food, clothes, and a place to live.

- If you are under age 18, you are probably getting Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

**Age-18 Redetermination** happens when you turn 18. Your benefit might change

- You should prepare by learning about the process and getting records organized
- After redetermination, you may or may not be found to be disabled: if you are not, you can appeal. If you are, the amount of money you receive may change

**Did you know?** – You can work while you get money from Social Security

- Know how much money you can have and still get SSI and Medicaid
- You may have someone called a **Representative Payee** taking care of your money



**RESEARCH.**



**EARN.**



**SAVE.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

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## **PREPARE:** Age-18 Re-Determination

If you are under 18 and you currently receive Social Security benefits, you will have to complete Age 18 Re-Determination, and this will decide if you will continue getting the benefits after you turn 18. Use the space below to help you get ready for re-determination process:

What medical records (documents about doctors visits, medicines you take, hospitalizations) could you prepare for the Social Security Administration?

What school records (documents about special education classes or IEPs) could you prepare for the Social Security Administration?

What job records (documents about your pay or taxes) could you prepare for the Social Security Administration?

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Social Security Benefits

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You might get **Social Security Benefits** (money) to help you pay for things like food, clothes, and a place to live. This money is given to people with disabilities because sometimes having a disability means you need a little help to pay for the things you need.



### How can I know what type of benefit I am getting?

If you are under age 18, you are probably getting Supplemental Security Income. Most people call it SSI. If you get SSI, you will also get Medicaid. One way to tell if you get SSI is the amount of your benefit. You can look up the current SSI amount through a quick internet search. It is important to know what benefit you are getting so that you know how to keep it or advocate for yourself if you think there is a problem with your benefit. You can also contact Social Security to ask what benefit you get.

### Will my benefit change when I turn 18?



The rules for getting benefits are different for young people and for adults. When you turn 18, Social Security will look at your situation and ask you and care providers such as doctors and social workers questions to decide if you should still get Social Security money. They will decide if you meet the definition of disability as an adult. This is called **Age-18 Redetermination**. You can find more information on Social Security's website.

You should be prepared for this redetermination by learning about the process and getting ready to give information to Social Security. The process begins when you get a letter from Social Security asking you for information. Social Security will ask you for information about things like medicines you take, if you have been in the hospital, doctor visits, any jobs you have had, if you were in special education classes and other things. This can be a lot of information and documents to collect and you will have to give it to Social Security in a short amount of time. But, if you prepare ahead of time you will be able to respond better to Social Security and in the short time Social Security gives you.

To prepare, you should keep copies of your records and organize them. For example, you can organize your records by type such as medical records, school records, and job records. You should also keep your records in a safe place where you can find them easily. You can also get ready to advocate for yourself during this process by reading about it or by talking to a friend who has gone through an Age-18 Redetermination. Also, you can ask someone like a trusted friend or family member to help you with this process.

## TIP

### For Age-18 Redetermination, you might need...

- **Medical records**, including what medicines you take, if you have gone to the hospital, and a log of any doctor visits
- **Job records**, such as your pay stubs or tax documents
- **School records**, like if you were in special education classes or had an IEP
- **Bank statements** for your savings or checking accounts
- **Living arrangement records**, such as your utility bills



### If I am found to be disabled as an adult, will the benefit amount I receive change?

If Social Security says that you are disabled as an adult after going through the Age-18 Redetermination, then your Social Security payment may change. This information will be in a letter Social Security sends you. This change may be because your parent or guardian has worked and they also get money from Social Security. This is a different kind of Social Security benefit and is based on your parent or guardian's work record, not disability. If this is the case, you may receive a combination of money based on your parent or guardian's work record and SSI or just one or the other. Your parent or guardian will still get their money from Social Security.

If you get Social Security money from a parent or guardian's work record, you may start to receive information about a health insurance called **Medicare**. You have to have been getting Social Security money as an adult for at least two years before you can get Medicare. You can still get Medicaid while you are waiting to get Medicare and maybe even after. Make sure to keep letters and information you get from Social Security in a safe and organized place as you may need them in the future. Medicaid and Medicare can be tricky so the more information you have the easier it is to figure out what is going on with your benefit.

### What happens if I am not found to be disabled as an adult at my age-18 re-determination?

If you get a letter from Social Security that you are not disabled as an adult, this means that you may no longer get Social Security benefits. You can appeal this decision to show Social Security why you are disabled as an adult and should still get benefits. The letter from Social Security will tell you how to appeal. Be sure to send your appeal within 10 days of getting the denial letter from Social Security so you can keep getting your money until Social Security makes a decision. Ask for help from a friend, family member, or advocate if you need help with the appeal process.

If you are in special education, working with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), or a similar service or program, you may continue to receive your Social Security money through something called Section 301 Payments. Make

sure to collect proof that you are in special education or a similar program before sending your appeal to Social Security and ask Social Security to give you Section 301 Payments. Examples of proof would be your IEP from school, your IPE from OOD, or other papers that say you were in special education or getting help from OOD.

### How can I work while I get money from Social Security?

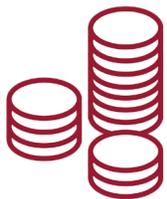
When you start working, your Social Security money and other benefits like food assistance and housing may get smaller or stop. But if you want to work, you may be able to find a way to keep your benefits. One way is through special rules by Social Security called work incentives. **Work incentives** help people with disabilities keep their benefits even when they are working. There are different kinds of work incentives. There are programs where you can help with work incentives you may qualify for called Work Incentive Planning and Assistance programs, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and some employment networks in the state. If you are already working with one of these programs, ask for help. If you are not, you can call the Ticket to Work hotline at 1(866)968-7842 to find the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program in your area.

### How much money can I have and still get SSI and Medicaid?

When you get SSI or Medicaid, you cannot save more than \$2000 - this is called a **resource limit**. If you have more than \$2000 saved, your SSI or Medicaid may stop. There are ways to save more money and still keep your SSI and Medicaid. A program called STABLE is a way for you to save more money into an account so it does not cause your SSI or Medicaid to stop. You can use your STABLE account for living expenses such as rent, bills, and food and other expenses like clothing for a job or books for school. The STABLE account can be easily set up at <https://www.stableaccount.com/>. The website also has more information about how much you can put into the account and who can add money to your account. If you would like more help setting up the account or have additional questions there is also a number on the website to call.



### Will someone be taking care of my money?



Some people have someone who manages their Social Security money. This person is called a **representative payee**. Representative payees must pay your bills on time, give you money for personal spending, and other responsibilities. A representative payee only manages your Social Security benefit unless you would like them to manage money you receive from work or elsewhere. You should talk to your representative payee regularly to make sure they know what your expenses and needs are. You should also ask them to tell you what they are doing with your money. This helps you to know where your money is going. When you talk with your representative payee, ask to look at your account or budgeting sheets, or both! With a representative payee you are also able to save toward goals like buying a car or putting a deposit on an apartment. Social Security has a guide for representative payees you can use to find out what your representative payee's responsibilities are.

If you think your representative payee is doing something wrong, you can ask for a different payee by visiting the local Social Security field office or you can call Disability Rights Ohio for more assistance.

## How can I learn about my Social Security benefits?

Social Security has a booklet that should come with the letter about your Age-18 Redetermination. This booklet has information on the process and ways you can get help. Here is the link: <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11005.pdf>.



Social Security also has an online tool called My Social Security Account to keep up to date with what is going on with your Social Security benefits. You can get copies of your award letter through this tool. Your **award letter** says that you get Social Security money and how much. Other agencies where you get other benefits, like food assistance or housing, may ask for a copy of this letter, so make sure you know where to find a copy.

Remember, the more you know about your Social Security benefits, the better you will be able to manage your money. Learn as much as you can, and keep track of your benefits and what you have to do to make sure that you keep getting your benefits. Be as organized as you can with paperwork, and keep the names and telephone numbers of people you have talked to and worked with. You never know when you will need the paperwork or person to help you. And remember that it can help you to talk with someone who has been through this process or an advocate like Disability Rights Ohio.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Help Getting and Keeping Housing

Safe housing is one of the most important things to get for yourself as you become an adult. As a tenant, you will have both rights and responsibilities.



- When looking for housing, **think about what you may need** for your disability, such as elevator access, wheelchair ramps, or shower grab bars.
- **Watch out** for problems like water leaks, exposed wiring, missing smoke alarms, broken windows or locks, and holes in the floors or walls.
- When you and a landlord come to an agreement, you will have to sign a lease. You should **read this carefully** and have someone else read it before you sign it.
- You might be able to get help paying for housing through a program like Section 8 housing. To apply, get in touch with your local housing authority.
- Under the Fair Housing Act, **you can get accommodations** from your landlord for your disability if you ask. If you think you are being discriminated against, **you can file a complaint**.
- Your landlord can only kick you out before your lease is done if you have not paid rent or have not met your responsibilities.



PLAN.



RESEARCH.



DOCUMENT.

 **QUICK TIPS**

Disability Rights Ohio

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PREPARE: Housing Checklist

There are lots of things to consider when looking at an apartment or house that you might live in. Bring this checklist with you to evaluate a new place to live:

- Turn on each faucet & shower
- Turn on and off each light
- Turn on and off the stove and oven
- Turn on and off microwave
- Check the temp. of the fridge and freezer
- Check for fire and carbon monoxide alarms and a fire extinguisher
- Open, close, and lock each window
- Check that all toilets flush properly
- Check number of outlets
- Check state of floors and carpets
- Check heating and cooling units
- Check accessibility features

What's the cost of rent?

Are pets allowed?

Who do you call in an emergency?

Are there parking spots/bus stops nearby?

Who manages the yard and sidewalk?

Are utilities included in rent?

What's the length of the lease?

What's the application fee and security deposit?

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting and Keeping a Place to Live

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Safe housing is one of the most important things to get for yourself as you become an adult. This section tells you how to rent a place to live. **Renting** means that the place is owned by someone else, called a **landlord**, and you pay that person money each month to live in the apartment. You are called the **tenant**. When you rent a place to live, you will have rights and responsibilities.

### How can I find a place to live?

It is important to find housing that works best for you based on what you need and how much money you have to spend on housing. There are many different kinds of places to live and many different ways to find them. You can live in an apartment or a house, alone or with roommates, near businesses like grocery stores, on a bus line, or away from the city. It is important to choose a location that works for you. If you use the bus you should think about how close bus stops are to your apartment. If you go to school or work, you may want to think about how close school or your job will be to where you live. If you need certain equipment in an apartment like grab-bars in a shower, a wheelchair ramp, or elevator, you should think about looking at places that have those things.

Once you decide where you want to live, you have to see if there are places for rent in that area. You can search online for a list of apartments for rent near where you want to live. You can also ask friends, family members, or others you know if they know of any places you can rent in the area you want to live. Sometimes libraries, grocery stores, or other businesses will have bulletin boards where people post apartments for rent or for roommates.

### How much will housing cost?

It is also important to pick a place to live that fits in your budget - some places cost more money than others. The costs of renting an apartment include rent plus utilities like water, electricity, and gas. You will also have to decide if you want Internet or TV, which will be more costs. Sometimes utilities are included in the rent, but if they are not, you will have to pay for these separately. If you find an apartment you want to rent, it is a good idea to call utility companies like the gas company, electric company, and water company to ask how much utility bills were for that apartment in the last year. Then, you will know how much it will cost to live in your apartment. The landlord might also be able to tell you how much utilities cost for that apartment.

You should also ask if there are any costs other than rent and utilities that you will have to pay. For example, you should ask if you will have to pay for parking if you have a car and how much that will be. If you have a pet, you should ask if there are extra costs for having a pet. You will also have to pay something called a **security deposit**, which is usually the same amount as your monthly rent.

## TIP

### You might be able to get help paying for housing!

- You may be eligible for public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8 housing)
  - Some counties have Section 8 housing for people who lived in foster homes
- If you think you might be eligible for a housing program, you should schedule an appointment with your local housing authority
- At your appointment, you will need to bring information about yourself, your family, and how much money you have

### How can I pay for housing?

Once you know all the costs to rent an apartment, you will need to decide if you have enough money to pay for it. Remember, there are other costs of living that you will have to pay for, like food, transportation, medicine, clothing, and entertainment, so it is important to pick a place to rent that leaves you with enough money left over for these other costs. One way to save money is by living with a roommate, who will help pay for part of the rent and utilities.

You might also be able to find help paying for housing. There are programs through your local housing authority like **public housing** or the **Housing Choice Voucher Program**. The Housing Choice Voucher Program is also known as **Section 8** housing. Some counties have Section 8 vouchers for people formerly in foster programs. If you think you qualify for help with housing, you should contact your local housing authority for an appointment. You might have to get on a waiting list for housing, so you should call as soon as you can. At your appointment, you will have to give information to the housing authority about yourself, your family, and how much money you have. You should ask the housing authority what documents you will need to bring with you so you can have them ready at your appointment.

If you get services from agencies like your county board of developmental disabilities or your local mental health board (ADAMH board), you should contact your case manager to ask about other help with housing.

### What should I keep in mind when renting?

When you find a place you want to rent, you should contact the landlord and ask to see the place before you can rent it. When you look at the place, you should make sure that it looks like a safe place to live. For example, there should not be broken windows or locks, holes in the walls or ceilings, broken or unprotected electrical wiring, or water leaks. The appliances like the stove, refrigerator, and microwave should work. There should be smoke detectors in places like the bedrooms and kitchen. It is a good idea to take someone with you when you go to see an apartment so that person can help you decide if it's the right place for you.

If you decide to rent a place, you will have to fill out some paperwork with the

landlord. The landlord may ask you to fill out an application and tell them how you will pay for rent. A landlord may also ask you for people who know you who the landlord can call to ask if they should rent to you.

Once your landlord decides to rent to you, you will have to sign a document called a **lease**. The lease tells you how much your rent will be and when and how you have to pay it. The lease will also tell you what other responsibilities you will have as a tenant like whether you can have a pet, other people live with you, and how to take care of the apartment. It is important that you read and understand your lease. If you do not understand anything in the lease, you should ask the landlord, or someone you trust, to explain it to you. It is a good idea to have someone you trust read the lease before you sign it. After you sign your lease, keep a copy of it in a safe place. You might need to look at it later if problems come up.

Some landlords do something called a **credit check**, which is a report that shows if you have things like credit cards or loans and if you have been paying them back on time. If you do not have good credit or no credit, a landlord might ask you to have you and someone else sign the lease. The person who signs the lease with you is called a co-signer. This person could be a family member or friend. A co-signer agrees to pay the landlord any money you owe them if you do not pay the landlord. If you think you need a co-signer, you should ask someone to do that for you before you look at apartments.

### **What are landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities?**

When you rent an apartment, your landlord has to make sure that the apartment is safe. This includes making sure that there is running water, hot water, and all needed repairs are made. Your landlord also has to tell you before they come into your apartment, unless there is an emergency. As a tenant, you have to keep the apartment clean, take out the garbage, use the plumbing and electrical fixtures properly, take care of the appliances like stove, refrigerator, and dishwasher, and not do things that bother your neighbors like play loud music.

### **What are my housing rights if I have a disability?**

A federal law called the **Fair Housing Act** and a law in Ohio say that a landlord cannot discriminate against you because of your disability. This means that your landlord cannot treat you differently because you have a disability and may have to make changes to the rules or your apartment if you need them because of your disability. These changes are called **reasonable accommodations** and **reasonable modifications**. A reasonable accommodation is a change in a landlord's rules, policies, or practices. For example, if a landlord has a "no-pet" policy, the landlord may have to let you have an emotional support animal if you need one. A landlord has to pay for a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable modification is making changes to your apartment like putting grab bars in the shower or adding a wheelchair ramp. Most of the time, you will have to pay for reasonable modifications and you have to get your landlord's approval before making them. Sometimes a landlord has to pay for reasonable modifications like if changes have to be made to a part of the building used by everyone, or if your apartment is owned by your local housing authority.

You have to ask your landlord for a reasonable accommodation or modification. If your landlord does not already know about your disability, they might ask you if

**If you notice your landlord has started to treat you differently, keep track of what is happening.**

you have a disability and what you need. It is usually best to give your landlord a letter from your doctor or medical provider that explains your disability and why you need the reasonable accommodation or modification you are asking for.

If you notice your landlord has started to treat you differently, keep track of what is happening. This means you should take notes of conversations you have with your landlord, take pictures of things that may need repaired, save emails or other communications from your landlord, and save any other documents that are related to being treated differently. For example, if you give your landlord a letter from your doctor, keep a copy of that letter for yourself.

If you think your landlord has discriminated against you because of a disability, you can file a **complaint** (also called a charge) with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). There are deadlines for filing complaints, so make sure find out what the deadlines are for the complaint you want to file. You will have to give any information you have about your complaint, so it is important to include the documents and information you have collected to show your landlord discriminated against you.

**What should I do if my landlord wants to kick me out?**

If your landlord tells you to leave your apartment before your lease is done, this is called **eviction**. A landlord can only evict you if you haven't paid your rent or you haven't met your responsibilities. Your landlord has to tell you in writing that they want you to leave and why. Then, the landlord has to ask a judge to tell you to leave. Once a judge says that you have to leave your apartment, you will have to leave by the time the judge says. If you do not leave, a sheriff may come to your apartment and make you leave. If a judge hasn't said you have to leave your apartment, your landlord cannot lock you out of your apartment, shut off utilities, or take your stuff out to make you leave. If you get a letter from your landlord telling you to leave, you should contact a lawyer or your local legal aid immediately for help.

**What if I am having problems with my housing?**

You should work with your landlord to get any problems with your apartment fixed. For example, if your window is broken, you should tell your landlord in writing and ask your landlord to fix it. You have to give your landlord some time to make the repair. If your landlord will not make repairs or takes too long, you cannot just stop paying rent. But, you can ask a court if you can put your rent into a special account until your landlord makes the repairs. This is called **rent escrow**. To use rent escrow, you have to first ask your landlord to make the repairs in writing and give your landlord enough time to make them. Usually, a landlord cannot take more than 30 days to make repairs and may have to make repairs sooner if the issue is an emergency (like a burst water pipe). After you have asked your landlord to make repairs and given

**QUICK CHECK**

**Do you know these terms?**

- Security deposit
- Lease
- Credit check
- Reasonable accommodations/modifications
- Complaint
- Eviction
- Rent escrow

them time to do them, you can go to court and ask to use rent escrow. You will have to fill out a form and give it to the court. You can usually get the form at the clerk of

**If you think you want to use rent escrow, you should talk to a lawyer for help.**

courts office. Then, the court will decide if you can use rent escrow. You will have to go to court to show the court why you need rent escrow and your landlord can fight it.

**How do I get my security deposit back?**

To get your security deposit back, you need to keep your apartment in good condition. When you move into an apartment it is a good idea to take pictures of the apartment and tell the landlord about any problems. This will help you show that you did not cause the problems. You should also take pictures when you move out to show that the apartment was in good condition when you left. You will also have to give your landlord an address where they can send you your security deposit. This does not have to be your next residence but it needs to be somewhere you can receive mail. If your landlord keeps some or all of your security deposit and you don't think they should, you should talk to a lawyer about if this was right and what you can do about it.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Healthcare

You might be able to get health insurance through Medicaid, which will help you pay for healthcare and other services for people with disabilities.

- Not everyone will qualify for Medicaid: to find out if you qualify, you can talk to your county's Jobs and Family Services office (JFS).
- When applying for Medicaid, you will need to provide information about your disability, how much money you make, and if you are a US citizen.
- If you receive Medicaid, you will likely have to pick a managed care plan to receive services. You can pick a new managed care plan during your annual enrollment period by going to <https://www.ohiomh.com/>.
- If you are under 21, you may be able to get Healthchek services through Medicaid, which makes it easier to get the healthcare you need.
- If you are denied Medicaid, you can file an appeal to have someone else review your application. When filing an appeal, you can get information from the appeal hearing officer and ask any questions you have.



**PREPARE.**



**APPLY.**



**GET HELP.**

 **QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PREPARE: Applying for Medicaid

Applying for Medicaid can seem like a big task. This activity will help you break down what documents you **might** need to complete your application. This list is not exhaustive, and you may need to provide more or less information. In addition to these documents, you will need to know your Social Security Number or legal immigrant document numbers.

## How can you show proof of income?

- Pay stubs from work
- Tax return or W2 form
- Statements from Social Security

## How can you show your current resources?

- Bank statements for checking and savings accounts
- Statements for any stocks or bonds
- Information for life insurance policies
- Information on any property and vehicles

## How can you show what medical coverage is available to you (through your job or otherwise?)

- Insurance policy numbers
- Information about healthcare you can get through your job

## How can you show your current residence?

- Statement from a landlord
- Deed or lease
- Rent receipt

## How can you show proof of citizenship or legal residence?

- Passport
- Driver's license
- ID card
- Green card
- Employment authorization card

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## **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Healthcare and Other Services**

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If you have a disability, you may get health insurance called **Medicaid**. Medicaid helps pay for health care and other services for some people with disabilities (and other people, too). Each state can make its own decisions about what services will be covered by Medicaid. So, what Ohio covers may be different from what you could get in another state. If you have something called a Medicaid card or a waiver, that means you have Medicaid health insurance.

### **How can I get Medicaid health insurance?**

If you don't have Medicaid, you will need to apply for it and meet certain conditions. Sometimes, you have to show that you don't have enough money to pay for your own health insurance. If you have questions about how to apply for Medicaid or what you need to show to get Medicaid, you should contact your county's Job and Family Services office, called **JFS**. There are different ways to get Medicaid, so even if you think you have too much money to get Medicaid, you should still think about contacting your local JFS and applying for Medicaid.

**Sometimes it can be hard to get in touch with someone at your local JFS office. It may take several tries to talk with someone or get an answer to your question. Keep trying.**

When you apply for Medicaid, you will have to show that you have a disability, how much money you have, and if you are a U.S. citizen. You should have this information ready because you won't be able to finish your application without it. You can apply for Medicaid online, in-person, through the mail, or over the phone. If you need help, you should apply in-person so someone can help explain the application and what happens next.

Sometimes it can be hard to get in touch with someone at your local JFS office. It may take several tries to talk with someone or get an answer to your question. Keep trying. You might also think about asking someone you trust to help you. If you call the wrong county JFS, do not worry! They should be able to connect you with the correct JFS.

### **What can I get from Medicaid?**

Medicaid can help you pay for a lot of different things, including medical services, some prescription drugs, nursing services, and lots more. To get more information about what you can get from Medicaid, you can contact your local county board of developmental disabilities or your local JFS office.

If you already have Medicaid, you may have a managed care plan. **Managed care plans** are health insurance companies. Most Ohioans who have Medicaid must join a managed care plan to get health care. They are supposed to work with hospitals,

doctors, and other health care providers to help you get health care services. You should contact your managed care plan if you have questions about your health care coverage—for example, whether you can see a particular doctor or whether a certain service is covered.

### How do I pick a managed care plan?

You can choose your managed care plan. You can also change your plan, but this has to be done during a certain time in the year called your **annual open enrollment period**. You can pick a managed care plan by visiting the following website: <https://www.ohiomh.com/>. That website also has information about the different managed health care plans and lets you compare them. It is important to read about what each managed care plan provides and pick the best one for you. For example, if you know you need a special services for your disability, you should make sure the plan you pick has those services.

If you like your current doctor and other health care providers, you should ask them which managed care plan they work with. Sometimes they might not work with any plan. If some of your providers work with one managed care plan but other providers do not, you may have to choose which plan has the most providers you want to use. If your providers do not work with the plan you choose, you will have to change providers.

### What are Healthchek Services?

If you have Medicaid and are younger than age 21, then Healthchek services are available to you. **Healthchek** is a special Medicaid program that makes it easier for young people to find and get the health care they need. Healthchek also allows young people to get more services than adults would get with Medicaid. If you need help finding a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider you should contact your county JFS and ask to speak with the Healthchek Coordinator. The Healthchek Coordinator can help you find a doctor, schedule appointments, and even help you get transportation to those appointments.



Many people do not know about Healthchek, including doctors and people who work at local JFS offices. If Medicaid tells you that you can't get a particular service that you need, make sure you ask if you can get the service under Healthchek.

### What if I disagree with a Medicaid-related Decision?

If you get a decision about your Medicaid services that you do not agree with or you do not like, you will receive a letter telling you about the decision. That letter will also tell you how you can appeal that decision. An **appeal** means you want someone else to look at the decision to see if it was right. You have to appeal within a short period of time so make sure you read all the paperwork sent to you about your decision so you do not miss important deadlines.

If you are getting services, and you get a letter telling you those services are going to stop or change, you can appeal. If you want to keep getting your services while you appeal, you will have to ask for an appeal quickly - this is usually 15 days, but your letter will give you a specific date. If you don't appeal by the date listed in your letter, your services can stop.

If you disagree with a decision made by a managed care plan, you usually have to appeal through your managed care plan first. Your plan will send you a letter that tells you how to appeal. You can also find this information in a document called a **benefits document**. You can also ask your managed care plan to help you appeal. If you disagree with the decision your managed care plan makes about your appeal, you can request a state hearing from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Bureau of State Hearings.

You must also request a state hearing if an agency that is not a managed care plan made the decision you disagree with. The agency must tell you in writing how to request a state hearing.

You can ask for a state hearing by calling or writing to the Bureau of State Hearings:

- Mail: ODJFS Bureau of State Hearings, P.O. Box 182825, Columbus, Ohio 43218-2825
- Fax: 614-728-9574
- Email: [bsh@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:bsh@jfs.ohio.gov), and put "State Hearing Request" in the subject line
- Online: <https://secure.jfs.ohio.gov/ols/RequestHearing/index.stm>
- Phone: 866-635-3748, choose option number 1 from the automated voice menu



### How can I get ready for an appeal or a hearing?

During an appeal, you will have to show why you disagree with the decision about your Medicaid services. Sometimes this means talking to your managed care plan or giving them more documents to show why you disagree.

In a state hearing, you will get an appointment (called a hearing) with someone called a **hearing officer** who will ask you questions about why you disagree with the decision made about your Medicaid services. You can also give the hearing officer documents to show why you disagree with the decision. Someone from Medicaid will also come to this appointment and talk to the hearing officer about the decision.

**To get ready for the hearing, you should collect the best information you have about why you disagree with the decision.**

To get ready for the hearing, you should collect the best information you have about why you disagree with the decision. You should get letters from your doctors about why you need the Medicaid service. You should also ask people who know you well to come with you to the hearing to tell the hearing officer why you need the Medicaid service. These people can be your parents, caregivers, social workers, case managers, doctors, nurses, aides, and others. It is also important to collect documents like your medical records or other paperwork that show why you need the Medicaid service. You will be able to give those documents to the hearing office to help them make a decision.

After the hearing, the hearing officer will send you another letter that tells you if they think the decision about your Medicaid services was right or wrong. If you don't like the hearing officer's decision, you can appeal that too. You will have to do this in a very short time, so be sure to read all of the information you get with your letter.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Mental Health

Your mental health affects how you think, feel, and act, so it's important that you ask for help when you need it.



- **Practice self-care** regularly to be proactive in taking care of your mental health.
- **Reach out** for help when you need it: you can use crisis services, referral services, school-based mental health services, services from community agencies, services from a residential treatment facility, services at an inpatient facility (psychiatric hospital).
  - If you are not sure where to start, you can contact a crisis center online, on the phone, or go in person. You can also bring a support person (like a friend or family member) with you.
- **Advocate** for yourself: When receiving services, you can talk to the Client Rights Officer to address your concerns or file a grievance about the services you are receiving.
- **Make a plan** to keep you safe in crisis; know who to call when you need help!



**TAKE CARE. REACH OUT. SPEAK UP.**

 **QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PRACTICE: Making Self-care a Priority

Self-care can look a lot different for everyone. The questions below will help you figure out what kind of self-care might be helpful for different needs. Remember that sometimes negative thoughts, feelings, actions, choices and how you treat others do not get better no matter how hard you try on your own. It is at those times you should tell someone, go to get help, or both.

What kind of things can you do to take care of yourself physically (your body)?

1.
2.
3.

What kind of things can you do to take care of yourself emotionally (your feelings)?

1.
2.
3.

What things can you do to take care of yourself psychologically (your mind)?

1.
2.
3.

What kind of things can you do to take care of yourself socially (your relationships)?

1.
2.
3.

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## **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Mental Health and Substance Use**

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We all have unique life experiences that make us who we are. This includes the people we know (family, friends, classmates, people we live with), places we go (school, vacation, other people's homes) what we experience (social media, books, music, conversations), what we do (eat, sleep, wear), how we are treated by society, and where we do things (home, school, shelter, hospital). Our identity grows and changes just like we do. You should be seen, heard and understood for who you are. The best time to start is now and the best place to start is exactly where you are in this moment.

### **What is mental health?**

By now you may have already heard the terms mental health and substance use. You may even already know someone who is in treatment for one or both of these things.

Your mental health includes many parts of who you are on the inside, parts that are not easily seen by others. Mental health includes your emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how you think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how you handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important throughout your entire life.



means that you know when to ask for help. Even though it's not easy to ask for help, asking for help can make you feel better.

Think about a time you had a sore throat. Sometimes when we have a sore throat we might wait to see if it goes away on its own. However, there are times when we wait and wait and it only gets worse. We might have to go to a doctor because we need help to get better. The same thing is true about mental health.



**It's okay to ask for help.**

## What is self-care?

Self-care means the things you can do on your own to feel better. Some self-care ideas are:

- Go on a walk break and enjoy nature
- Listen to your favorite music
- Call or text a friend/someone who supports you
- Take whatever time you can to sit and relax
- Try a free relaxation or meditation app on your phone
- Take some time to write down or draw out your feelings (writing about your feelings can help you work through any stress or anxiety)
- Set a routine for yourself
- Eat nutritious foods each day
- Enjoy your favorite snack
- Turn off the television or disconnect from social media for a few hours
- Change out of your sleep clothes and into fresh clothing
- Take time to take a shower
- Give yourself time to take a break

Sometimes negative thoughts, feelings, actions, choices and how you treat others do not get better no matter how hard you try on your own. It is at those times you should tell someone, go to get help, or both. This takes courage. You can do this!

## Where can I find help?

There are many places where you can get help. If you are not sure where to start, you can contact a crisis center online, on the phone, or go in person. Crisis centers are safe and non-judgmental. They can help you feel supported and empowered to work on what is happening in your life.

To help you feel more comfortable, you can have a support person (a family member, a friend, or an advocate) go with you.

## What types of services can I use?

- **Crisis Services** help you find supports, learn coping skills, and make safety plans. Crisis services can be on-line (text and phone) and in person. There are some crisis centers that have a place to stay overnight if you are not feeling safe enough to leave. This might mean that you are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else and need to be someplace where you cannot act on your thoughts.

One example of an online crisis service is the Crisis Text Line. You can text the word HOME to 741741 and will be connected with a Crisis Counselor. The crisis counselor will talk with you about how you are feeling and



help you make a plan for what to do next.

- **Referral Services** are services that can help you find mental health providers close to where you live. You can find a referral service by searching on the internet using your computer, tablet, or smart phone. You can also search for providers like a counselor, social worker or find a peer or self-help group.  
One example of a referral services is SAMHSA National Help Line at 1-800-662-4357 or 1-800-662-HELP. This is a confidential 24-hour-a-day, every day, information service that gives referrals to local mental health treatment options, support groups, and community organizations.
- **School Based Mental Health Services** are services that you can get at school. If you have an IEP/504 plan, you should ask your IEP/504 team to help you get these services. If you do not have an IEP/504 plan, you should ask your school counselor or other trusted adult to help you get these services.
- **Community Agencies** are places close to where you live or are staying, and can help you with:
  - Case management services (you may be able to get case management services where you live or are staying)
  - Help understanding your medication and how to take it
  - Group, individual, and family counseling
- **Residential Treatment Facility** are places where young people live temporarily outside of their homes where they can be supervised and monitored by trained staff. These places will give you mental health services and provide your education while you are there. Young people may stay at residential treatment facilities for several weeks or months.
- **Inpatient Facility** is another name for a mental health or **psychiatric hospital**. These hospitals help you temporarily when you may be feeling most unsafe and they can help you with your immediate mental health needs. If you go to an inpatient facility, you may have to stay there for several days or longer.

## What Are My Rights? - Advocating for Services & Fixing Problems

You know yourself better than anyone else. Even when you are not feeling your best you can make decisions about what you might need. No matter where you are getting help, you can speak up for yourself and participate in decisions made about your care. You should be heard and feel supported by your service providers.

Almost every place where you can get help will have a document that tells you what your rights are and how you can speak up to get what you need. You must have your rights explained to you in a way that you can understand and be able to speak with the person who can help advocate for your needs when you do not feel they are being met. Most places call this person a **Client Rights Officer**. The client rights officer can also help you write down your concerns and ask someone to look at them - this is called a grievance.

**You know yourself better than anyone else. Even when you are not feeling your best, you can make decisions about what you might need.**

If you do not get a copy of your rights from your mental health provider, you should ask for a copy and read it so you understand how to speak up for yourself. If you have questions about your rights, you should ask the client rights officer or your provider to explain them to you. The rights documents should also tell you what you can do if you made a grievance about a problem and you did not get the answer you wanted.

### How Can I Find Support?

It can help to talk to other people who have gone through what you are going through. Joining peer, self-help, and advocacy groups are ways to meet people, talk about ideas to help you, and learn from others who have advocated for themselves. People with similar life experiences may also have good ideas about what they have done to get services.

### How Can I Stay Organized?

It can be hard to stay organized, especially when you are not feeling well. Being organized can help reduce stress in your life and help you feel like you are more in control. The most important thing is to find something that works for you.

#### Three suggestions for keeping organized:

- Keep paperwork in a 3 ring binder or folder with sheet protectors and dividers so you can keep all your paperwork in one place and organize it.
- Take pictures of important information with your cell phone, send the image to your e-mail, and tag it with a word you will remember so you always have it and can find it easily.
- Use your cell phone to keep notes, track your appointments, and use alarms as reminders.



### How Can I Keep Myself Safe?

Create a Safety Plan: A safety plan helps you know what to do when you feel unsafe or in crisis. It lists resources and supports for you to use. You can make one for yourself or ask a counselor or other professional to help you make one.

#### Helpful Tips for the Note Section of your Telephone:

- Store the names of 3 people you can call
- Store 3 self-care ideas that work for you
- Store a crisis number of your choosing



**Make a safety plan that works for you.**

#### Knowledge is Power:

The more you know the better you will be able to advocate for yourself and the more likely you will find services that work for you. You can learn more about mental health services from people who have used them. You can also search on the internet or read the resources in this booklet.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Reproductive Health

**You have the same rights and needs as people without disabilities to reproductive health information and care.** Learning more about your sexual health & how to advocate for yourself can be good for you! These tips can help you stay safe and ask for help when you need it:



- Understanding & advocating for your sexual well-being can help you stay safe. This might include asking about sex, gender, sexuality, and resources.
- Having a disability may mean that you need an accommodation from your doctor: if you need an accommodation, submit the request in writing!
- You have the right to receive many kinds reproductive healthcare even if you are under 18, including pregnancy tests, birth control & emergency contraceptives, and STD testing.
- You have the right to decide who you have a relationship with, including whether or not you are having sex.



**LEARN.**



**STAY SAFE.**



**ADVOCATE.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

## **PREPARE:** Talking to Your Doctor

Talking with your doctor about sex, relationships, or family planning can seem intimidating! Use the questions below to plan out what you'll need to have a successful appointment:

What is the main reason you want to meet with your doctor?

Do you need to request an accommodation (help) to meet with your doctor? If yes, what is it?

Use this space to list any concerns & questions you want to bring up during your appointment:

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Reproductive Health

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**Reproductive health** includes many things like sexual relationships, family planning, and medical care like check-ups with your doctor and tests to make sure you are healthy. You have the same rights and needs as people without disabilities to reproductive health information and care. For example, you have the right to choose who you have sex with or if you want to start a family. You also have the right to regular health check-ups like breast exams, Pap smears, or testicular and prostate exams. It is important to have information about your sexual health so you can make decisions about your body and your family. Sometimes, people without disabilities



think that having a disability means that you do not have the same reproductive health needs as people without disabilities. It is important to find doctors and other service providers who understand that **you have the same rights and deserve the same care as everyone else**. The resources in this section can help you find providers who understand your right to reproductive health.

### Is learning about my sexual health and speaking up for what I need good for me?

Yes! There are many reasons why knowing about your own sexual health can help you. For example, you might have questions about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation and having more information about these things might answer the questions you have and give you comfort for how you are feeling. You may have had bad sexual experiences, and knowing what supports are available can help you get the care you need. Knowing more about sexual health can also help you advocate for yourself and decrease the risk that you might be mistreated or abused. Being okay with who you are in your sexual health will help you have healthy relationships and be happier.

### Can learning about my sexual health and speaking up for what I need keep you safe?

Yes. People with disabilities are more likely to be abused or be victims of crime. It is important to know how to stay safe and knowing about your sexual health can help you do that. For example, it is important to know about safe sex practices and healthy relationships where you do not feel forced to do something you do not want to do or you are not comfortable with. It is important to know about your rights to reproductive health care so you know what your doctors and other medical providers should be doing to make sure you are healthy. If you feel unsafe in a relationship or that you have been abused or forced to do something you did not want to do, you can contact some of the resources in this section. You can also talk to a trusted adult for help.

## Can I ask for help if I need it because of my disability?

Sometimes you might need to ask service providers to change the way they do something because of your disability so you can get the help you need. This is called a reasonable accommodation. You can ask for accommodations from people like your doctors and other medical providers; providers you might talk to about pregnancy, family planning, or being a parent; providers who help you if you've been abused or a victim of crime; and many others. For example, you might not be able to wait in a waiting room with other people for a long time so you might have to ask the provider to give you the first appointment of the day so you don't have to wait for other people to be seen first. If you want to ask for a reasonable accommodation, you should ask for it in writing. You must tell the provider what you need and that you need it because of your disability. You might have to give the provider more information about your disability and why you need an accommodation.



## If I am under 18 what are my rights to obtaining reproductive healthcare?

In Ohio, if you are under 18, you still have reproductive rights. You can do the following without your parents' permission:

- Get a pregnancy test;
- Get birth control, including emergency contraception (the morning after pill);
- Get sexually transmitted infection and HIV testing, but be sure to ask your provider if they have to tell anyone the results of the tests;
- Get services related to sexual assault or abuse, but the provider might have to tell your parent or guardian that you have received these services;
- Ask a judge if you can get an abortion without getting your parents' permission. You should talk to a lawyer about how to do this if you need it.



## If I have Guardian, what are my reproductive health rights?

The law does not say what rights you have in your reproductive health if you have a guardian. But, there are still things you can do to advocate for yourself. Sometimes, a judge may tell you that you get to make your own decisions about your medical care even if you have a guardian. Sometimes, a judge may say that the guardian can make decisions about your medical care. It is important for you to know what decisions are still yours to make and what decisions your guardian can make for you. You can get this information by reading the document called **"Letters of Guardianship,"** which the judge will give to you and your guardian. If you don't have a copy of your Letters of Guardianship, you can ask the court for a copy. If a lawyer helped you with your guardianship, you can also ask the lawyer for a copy of your Letters of Guardianship and to tell you what decisions you can make for yourself.

If your guardian can make decisions about your medical care, you still have the right to tell your guardian and a judge what you want. The judge and guardian must consider what you want, but they will make the final decision and they don't always

have to agree with you. One way you are more likely to get what you want, is to show your guardian and the judge that you know about your own sexual health and you have made a good decision about what you want. **If you need help, you should talk to a lawyer if you have one or you can call Disability Rights Ohio.**

### **Can I decide who I want to have a relationship with?**

You have the right to make your own decisions about relationships. You can have a relationship with another person, including sex, so long as you know that you can say no to things you do not want to do, understand what you are doing, and understand what might happen as a result. This is called **informed consent**. You may have this right even if you have a guardian, but, your guardian may be able to stop your relationship or some of the things you are doing in your relationship. If you don't like the decisions your guardian is making about your relationship, you can contact a lawyer for help. You can also write to the court to tell the judge what you think.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Getting Help with Legal Services

There are 2 basic kinds of legal matters that lawyers help with:

- 1. Criminal Law:** Criminal law means that someone has broken a city, state or federal law and they are being charged with a crime. If you are being charged with a crime, you should talk to a lawyer who works in criminal law.
- 2. Civil Law:** Civil law includes all other legal issues that aren't criminal. If you are sued or thinking of suing someone else, you should still talk to an attorney to protect yourself.



These are some reasons you might need a lawyer:

- Criminal charges are filed against you or you are being investigated for a crime
- You are denied disability benefits from Social Security or other public benefit programs
- You have been fired from or injured at your job
- If you believe you have been discriminated against because of your disability, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or age



**RESEARCH.**



**CONTACT.**



**MEET.**

 **QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

## **PREPARE:** Meeting with a Lawyer

If you think you need to meet with a lawyer, you might want to do some research on different lawyers first! Use the space below to write down potential lawyers & their contact information:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area of Law</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Email</b>

Use this space to write anything you might want to remember for the meeting:

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Finding Legal Services

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In Ohio, when you turn 18 years old, you are an adult and that gives you rights and responsibilities you may have not have dealt with before. Some of the things you experience as an adult may cause you to need the advice and services of a lawyer. Lawyers are also called attorneys.

Most people don't understand what lawyers do and how they can help in a variety of different situations. It is important to know when you should talk to a lawyer and when you can handle issues that come up in your life on your own. It does not matter how smart you are, having a lawyer to protect you can make the difference between a good or a bad legal outcome for you.

### What basic kinds of legal matters can lawyers help me with?

#### Criminal and Civil:

**1. Criminal Law:** Criminal law means that someone has broken a city, state or federal law and they are being charged with a crime. If you are being charged with a crime, you should talk to a lawyer who knows about criminal law and helps people who are charged with crimes. If you are charged with a crime and you could go to jail, you will usually have a right to have an attorney help you if you cannot afford to pay for an attorney. Even if you are not entitled to a free attorney or you feel you are not guilty of a crime, you should still talk with an attorney to protect yourself and your rights!

**2. Civil Law:** Civil law includes all other legal issues that aren't criminal. These include cases where a person sues (files a case in court) another person or business to try to get some money for a wrong done to them. Civil law also covers contracts, buying or selling property, divorces, child custody cases, and a variety of other matters that adults may have to deal with in their daily lives.

People usually do not get a free attorney in civil cases. However, if you are sued or thinking of suing another, you should still talk to an attorney to protect yourself. Many lawyers will meet with you the first time to talk about your case for free. You also might be able to find a lawyer to help you for free or for a low cost. If you do not



have a lot of money, you may be able to get help from Legal Aid.

## How do I know when I should talk with a lawyer?

Lawyers can be helpful in many situations. Once you are an adult, you have certain rights and responsibilities that you have not had before, like the right to vote, marry, divorce, buy a car, rent an apartment, buy a home, start a business, or get a full time job. All of these activities have legal responsibilities that go along with them.

Some common situations where you can get help from a lawyer include:

- Criminal charges are filed against you or you are being investigated for a crime;
- If you are sued by someone for damages (money) and you might lose a lot of money or property if you lose the lawsuit;
- If you are involved in a divorce or child custody case;
- If you have been fired from or injured at your job;
- If you believe you have been discriminated against because of your disability, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or age;
- If you are involved in a car accident and someone was injured;
- If you want to start your own business;
- If you want to make a will;
- If you are denied disability benefits from Social Security or other public benefit programs; or,
- If you need to file bankruptcy because you can't afford to pay your bills.

## How do I find an attorney, and what can I do if I can't afford to hire an attorney?



Lawyers can be expensive, but not talking to an attorney in some situations can end up costing you even more. You should look for an attorney to talk with you at no cost or a lower cost, and attorneys who will not charge you for the first meeting.

Usually, attorneys know a lot about certain areas, but they do not know everything about every law. It is important for you to find an attorney who knows about the law in the issue you have. For example, if you want a divorce, find a lawyer who works in that area of the law.

There are places that will give you lists of attorneys in the area you are looking for. Some examples are bar associations like the Ohio State Bar Association or local bar associations, which are organizations that support lawyers and communities on legal issues.

**Ohio State Bar Association-** List of bar associations across the state for referral to an attorney: <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:ad6c956-62a1-4b2c-864e-2187263a8e97>

**Legal aid services** for low income individuals may be able to provide you with legal help with many different legal issues (for example, credit card or other debt collection cases, bankruptcy, student loans, payday and car title loans, other consumer issues, family law issues like child custody, child support, divorce, housing issues such as evictions, fair housing violations, public benefits like Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps, veterans benefits, wills, power of attorneys, guardianship issues, some tax issues, and help applying for naturalization).

To find a Legal Aid office near you, you can call 1-866-LAW-OHIO (1-866-529-6446) or find out online at <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:eb636f8d-5781-4da1-9cf2-c25580f27c24>

- [Legal Aid Society of Columbus](#)
- [Legal Aid Society of Cleveland](#)
- [Legal Aid Society of Cincinnati](#)

Depending on the legal matters you need help with, you may be able to get help from other programs that offer free or low cost legal advice and help. Here is a list of organizations that provide low or no cost legal resources:

- [Disability-Related Resource Center](#) from Disability Rights Ohio
- [Need legal information, forms or a lawyer?](#) from Ohio Legal Help
- [Lawyer Referral Services](#) from the Columbus Bar Association
- [Self Help Resource Center](#) from the Franklin County Municipal Court
- [Legal Resources for Military Families](#) from ABA Home Front
- [Domestic Relations Law](#) Information from National Paralegal
- [LSS CHOICES](#) for Victims of Domestic Violence in Franklin County Ohio from [Issnetworkofhope.org](http://Issnetworkofhope.org)
- [Home page](#) from Ohio Domestic Violence Network ([odvn.org](http://odvn.org))
- [Legal Services](#) from Community Refugee & Immigration Services ([crisohio.org](http://crisohio.org))
- [Legal Clinic](#) from Capital University Law School
- [Ohio Public Defender Commission](#) | from [ohio.gov](http://ohio.gov) (criminal matters)
- [Ohio Legal Services](#) (legal help for low income individuals)
- [FREE Legal Aid Ohio STATE](#) - Pro Bono Help

Some other resources that may interest you :

- [Law Facts: Now You're 18 | Ohio State Bar Association](#)
- [FOSTER CARE TRANSITION TOOLKIT](#) from [ohio.gov](http://ohio.gov)
- [Chart of Ohio's court system](#) from [ohio.gov](http://ohio.gov)

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: What to Know About Criminal Justice

## If you are accused of a crime...

- 1. Know your rights.** If you are arrested, you have the right to an attorney, the right to remain silent, and the right to be communicated with in a way you understand. You also have the right to ask for help because of your disability.
- 2. Be prepared.** If you are taken to jail, make sure you have your medications or necessary equipment. If you need an accommodation, you can talk to the ADA Coordinator at the jail.

## If you are a victim of a crime or want to prepare in case something bad happened to you:

- 1. Make a safety plan** in case something bad were to happen to you. You can get help with this from a person you trust or a local organization.
- 2. Make your own choices.** If you are a victim of crime, it is up to you whether you tell the police about the crime.
- 3. Be an advocate.** As a victim of crime, you have certain rights under Marsy's Law. These rights will help you advocate for yourself.



**PLAN.**



**RESEARCH.**



**ADVOCATE.**

 **QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PREPARE: Start Your Safety Plan

Do you already have a safety plan in place? YES  NO

If YES, is it up to date? YES  NO

Who could you ask to help you create or update your safety plan?

What kind of things would you want to include in your new or updated plan?

What do you need to do more research on?

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## **SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Criminal Justice**

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It is possible that you could become involved in the criminal justice system. It is important to know what your rights are in these situations. The criminal justice system is very complicated so it is always a good idea to ask for help if you don't understand something. Use the information below to help you. This section talks about some of your important rights, but not all of them. Remember to check with your attorney (if you have one) for any legal advice about your situation.

### **What should I do if I'm arrested?**

#### **Know your rights:**

It is important that you know what your rights are and how to use them so that you protect yourself as much as possible in the criminal justice system. If you are arrested, the police should tell you what your rights are. If they do not - ask. And, ask them to explain your rights to you if you don't understand.

#### **Important rights if you are arrested**

*You don't have to talk to the police*

This is called your right to remain silent. This means that you do not have to talk to the police or answer any of their questions. You do have to tell them information like your name, birth date, or social security number. This is called personally identifying information. If you don't want to tell the police anything else, you can tell the officer that you are "using your right to remain silent."

#### **You can ask for an attorney to help you**

You also have the right to an attorney (also called a lawyer). You can tell the police that you want an attorney. If you cannot pay for an attorney, one will be chosen for you. If you ask for an attorney, police must stop asking you questions until your attorney arrives. Your attorney will be able to tell you about more of your rights.

#### **You can ask for help if you need it because of your disability**

You have the right not to be discriminated against because of your disability. This right comes from a federal law called the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. The ADA includes the right to a reasonable accommodation. This means that, if necessary because of your disability, you have a right to ask for changes to be made to the way police do things so that you will be treated the same as a person without a disability. For example, if police use handcuffs every time they arrest someone and you have a disability where handcuffs could hurt you, you can ask the police not to use handcuffs and tell them why.

#### **You can ask for police to communicate with you in a way you understand**

You have the right to effective communication under the ADA. This means that the

police need to communicate with you in a way that you are able to understand them. You may need to let the police officers know what you need and how they can best communicate with you. For example, if you are Deaf and need an interpreter, the police have to get an interpreter for you to communicate with you.

**Remember, you are not asking for a favor. It is the police officer's responsibility to make sure you are treated equally.**

Remember, you are not asking for a favor. It is the police officer's responsibility to make sure you are treated equally. You have these rights throughout the entire criminal justice process. If you are not getting what you need, ask for someone to help you - this person may be called the ADA

Coordinator. You can also ask your lawyer or any advocate you have.

## **What should I do if I am taken to jail?**

### **Make sure you have your medications and important medical equipment:**

If you are taken to jail, your personal items will be taken away from you when you arrive. Let the police know if you have prescription medications that you will need while in jail or other medical needs. If those items are still taken away from you, ask the jail in writing for your medications or medical equipment/supplies that you need. For example, if you need a cane or walker for mobility or technology to help you communicate, ask for it in writing. You might have to ask the jail how to put your request in writing. You can also ask if there is an **ADA Coordinator** you can talk to. This person is responsible for knowing the ADA's requirements.

### **Ask for what you need for your disability:**

Jails have to follow the ADA too. If the jail gives something to people without disabilities, like time outside of cells, they have to give it to people with disabilities too. You can ask for reasonable accommodations so that you can participate in these activities. For example, if you need extra time out of your cell because of your disability, ask the jail for extra time and tell them why. Let the jail know as soon as you can if you need accommodations; it is best to do this in writing. You may need to remind them you have a right to these things under the ADA. If the jail says no to a request for a reasonable accommodation that you believe is a mistake, you can ask to talk to the jail's ADA Coordinator.

You can also file a complaint if you don't get the accommodation you asked for. You can do this by using the jail's ADA or internal grievance process. You should be told about the grievance process and how it works when you get to jail. If you are not told about it - ask.

## **What happens next?**

You will have to go to court, but what happens at court will depend on your age and your case. You will get an attorney if you cannot pay for one. Because the criminal justice system is very complicated, it is always a good idea to have an attorney help you even if you think you don't need one. The best way to get information about your case and what will happen next is from your attorney.

### **Tips for working with your attorney:**

Tell your attorney if you think your rights were violated when you were arrested or in jail. It is best if you can give your attorney as much information as possible, like who



violated your rights (name of police officer or corrections officer), when, and how.

Tell your attorney about other people the attorney could talk to for information about your case. For example, your attorney could talk to people who were with you when you were arrested or who saw the event you were arrested for. The attorney could talk to your parents or friends or neighbors or other people you think would be helpful to your case.

Tell your attorney about how your disability affects you and what supports or services you need because of your disability. It is important to tell your attorney what services you have gotten in the past because of your disability, like an IEP in school or mental health services. This information will help your attorney understand how to work with you and how your disability may be important to your case. It will be important for the court to understand your disability too.

Your attorney also needs to follow the ADA, so you might have to ask for reasonable accommodations from your attorney so that you will be able to participate in your case. You should also tell your attorney the best way to communicate with you so you can understand.

### Resources:

- The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD) available to help on individual cases involving a person with I/DD, criminal charges, and request for services or info about accommodations in the criminal justice system. Request for Assistance form: <https://thearc.org/request-assistance-form/>
- Working with the Criminal Defense Lawyer: A Guide to Families- <http://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Working-with-Crim-Defense-Lawyers.pdf>
- DRO- Access to Services in Jail: [https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/access\\_to\\_services\\_in\\_jail](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/access_to_services_in_jail)

## What should I do if I am a victim of a crime?

A victim of crime is a person who had something bad happen to them that was against the law. Being a victim of crime can be scary and confusing. You have rights as a victim, and there are steps you can take to help keep you safe and support you through a very hard time.

### Make a plan for what to do if something bad happens to you:

You should create a plan so you will be ready in case something bad happens to you. This is called a **safety plan**. Having a safety plan helps you know what to do if you are in an emergency or unsafe situation. You can make your own safety plan

**You can make your own safety plan or you can also ask a trusted support person to help you make your safety plan**

or you can also ask a trusted support person to help you make your safety plan. There are many local organizations that can assist you with safety planning, including domestic violence centers, adult advocacy centers, or county boards of DD.

People with disabilities are more likely to be a victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking is

where another person controls you and makes you do things you do not want to do. You should learn about human trafficking and include what you learn in your safety plan.

In an Emergency, Call 911. Follow the instructions of the 911 operator. Once you have done that, look at your safety plan for next steps and who to call or where to go.

If there is Not an Emergency. Look at your safety plan and follow it. Ask for help from local victim service organizations. The criminal justice system can be confusing and you do not need to go through it alone. If you are able to, it is a good idea to keep notes of everything you can remember about what happened to you. This will make it easier to explain to the police, your victim representative, or the prosecutor what happened to you, especially if it's been awhile since the crime happened.

### **Telling police about the crime:**

It is completely up to you whether you report the crime to the police. You can talk to a trusted person like a friend or family member to help you decide if you want to report the crime to the police.

You can also talk to local victim service organizations about if you want to report the crime to the police. A list of victim services organizations can be found here: <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Individuals-and-Families/Victims/Victim-Services-Directory>.

If you do report, decide if you want to report over the phone or go to the police station. Police officers have to follow the ADA, so you should ask for any accommodations you will need during an interview, such as: an ASL interpreter, a support person, breaks, documents in an accessible format, and physical accommodations such as requesting the police come to your house to talk to you.

### **It is completely up to you whether you report the crime to the police**

After you've made your report, ask for the police officer's name and badge number, the report number, contact information for the person investigating the crime, and what are the next steps. Reporting a crime to the police can be upsetting, so you may want to have a trusted person with you.

### **Know your rights:**

If you are a victim of crime, you have rights - these rights may be called **Marsy's Law**. It is important that you know your rights so you can advocate for yourself during the criminal justice process. Remember you can talk to local victims' rights organizations, including DRO, for help with understanding your rights. Your rights can be found here: <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2930> and <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution/section?const=1.10a>.



### **Important rights to know:**

Under Marsy's Law, victims of crime have the right to:

- be treated with fairness, dignity and respect;

- reasonable and timely notice of all public proceedings involving the criminal offense that you were a victim of (you must request this right);
- be heard in any public proceeding on the case when one of your rights is implicated;
- reasonable protection from the accused;
- reasonable notice if the accused is released or escapes (you must request this right);
- refuse an interview by the accused or their attorney;
- full and timely restitution from the accused (you must request this right);
- have the case not be unreasonably delayed (you must request this right);
- speak with the attorney for the government (you must request this right);
- have a copy of these rights provided to you in writing.

It can be confusing to know when and how these rights apply, so it is best to contact a victims' rights attorney or advocate, including DRO.

### **You can ask for someone to stay away from you:**

If you think a person may hurt you, you can ask for a **civil protection order or CPO**. A CPO is when a judge tells another person to stay away from you. There are different kinds of CPOs.

To get a CPO you will need to fill out a form and give it to the court. You can ask the court in your county for the form. Make sure you complete everything on the form before giving it to the court. After you give the form to the court, you will have to talk to a judge and tell the judge why you want a CPO. This is called an ex parte hearing. The judge will decide if you can have a CPO. This CPO will only last for a short period of time - around 2 weeks. Then, the judge will tell the person that you have the CPO against that you have asked for a CPO to last for a longer time. The judge will ask that person to come to court so the person can tell the judge their side of the story. This is called the full hearing. You will also have to come to court for the full hearing and talk to the judge about why you need a CPO. After the full hearing, the judge will decide if you can have a CPO for a longer time.

### **You can prepare for your CPO hearing:**

The judge will ask you for all information you have about why you need a CPO. You should make a list of all the things the person has done to you, include dates of when these things happened if you know. You should describe as best you can why you are scared of the person now. If you have pictures of any injuries or damage, take those pictures with you. If anyone was with you when the person hurt or scared you, ask that person to come to court with you to talk to the judge. It is always a good idea to have someone who can help you get a CPO. You can ask your local victims' service organization, including DRO, for help with getting a CPO.

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## SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: Voting

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One of the exciting things about turning 18 is being old enough to vote in your local, state, and national elections.

### **Voting is one of the best ways to self-advocate**

There are many reasons why voting is important. It is your right as a citizen and it gives you power to be part of making decisions about things that effect your life. You get the chance to tell people who make the rules why certain things are important to you. People without disabilities sometimes do not understand what people with disabilities need. Voting can help make sure people with disabilities get their voices heard. Your vote helps get people into important offices so that they can fight for the things that you think are important. By voting, you will have a say on who is President of the United States or who is the Governor of Ohio. You can vote on things that impact parts of your life such as healthcare, housing, and public transportation. Voting can also affect the things in the community where you live like how much money a school will get or whether your roads will be repaired. Voting helps protect your rights as a person with a disability.

### **Who can vote?**

In Ohio, you can vote if:

- You are a U.S. Citizen.
- You are at least 18 years old on or before Election Day
- You have lived in Ohio for at least 30 days before Election Day.
- You have registered to vote.

In Ohio, you cannot vote if:

- You are currently in jail or prison for a felony conviction. Once you are released from custody you can register again to vote. If you are in jail or prison for a misdemeanor, you can still vote.
- A court has found that you are guilty of breaking laws about elections.
- A probate court has determined that you are “incompetent to vote.” This is very rare.

### **How do I get ready to vote?**

If you want to vote, you have to register to vote by filling out a Voter Registration form. You can get a Voter Registration form and register to vote at certain public places like your school, library, post office, Board of Elections, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, or public university or public college. If you need help filling out the Voter

Registration form, you can ask for help at one of these places. For example, if you have an IEP, you can ask your IEP team for help filling out the Voter Registration form.

If you cannot go in-person to get a Voter Registration form, you can ask the Ohio Secretary of State or your Board of Elections to mail one to you.

Once you fill out your Voter Registration form, you must return it to your county's Board of Election's office either by mail or in-person or you can return it to where you got it and ask them to send your form back for you. You can also have someone you know return your form.

You can also register to vote online by going to the Ohio Secretary of State's website and filling out the online Voter Registration Form.

To register to vote, you will need to give your Ohio driver's license or Ohio identification card number and the last four digits of your Social Security number. You have to register at least 30 days before the election you want to vote in.

## HOW-TO

### Get registered by...

- Filling out the form online on the Secretary of State's website
- Printing the form and mailing it to your county's Board of Elections
- Going in-person to your county's Board of Elections
- Going in-person to a public place like the library

## How can I know who and what I'm voting for?

Most people vote for people who think the same way they do or believe in the same goals. It is important to know about the issues and people you are voting for so you vote for the person or issues you think will help you. You can get information about local, state, and national issues and people by looking for trusted sources of information. This could be a person, website, or organization you trust.

## What are the different ways to vote?

In Ohio, voters have three ways to vote: absentee voting by mail, early in-person voting, in person on Election Day. Absentee voting is when you vote on-paper by mail before Election Day. Early in-person voting is when you vote in-person before Election Day (check with your Board of Elections about where you can vote early in-person in your county). On Election Day, you can go in person to your polling location. After you register to vote, you will receive a postcard in the mail that tells you where your polling location is. You can get more information on the different ways to vote on the Ohio Secretary of State's website, your local Board of Elections website, or Disability Rights Ohio's website.

**Absentee  
by mail**

**In person  
early**

**In person on  
Election Day**

## What ID do I need to vote?

You will need to have an ID to vote. If you don't have an ID, you should get one before voting. One type of ID you can use is an Ohio driver's license or state ID card. You can get either of these IDs at a Bureau of Motor Vehicles office in your area. Your ID should have your current address on it and should match the address you used for your Voter Registration form. If you don't have or can't get a driver's license or state ID card, you can use something else that has your name and current address on it like a utility bill or government check (Social Security check). If you're not sure if you have the right ID, you should contact your county Board of Elections and ask them for help. You can also get more information about IDs that you can use to vote on the Ohio Secretary of State's website.



## What if I need help voting because of my disability?

If you need help voting because of your disability, you can ask your Board of Elections or the people working at your polling location for help. You should be able to get into your polling location and use the voting machines. Polling locations should have accessible parking spaces and entrances for people with disabilities to use. If you cannot get in to your polling location, you can ask the people working there to bring paperwork (ballot) to you outside the polling location so you can vote. This is called **curbside voting**.

Each polling location will also have voting machines that people who are blind or need large print can use. You can ask the people working at the polling location to help you use that machine. You can also have extra time to vote if you need it and you can have someone help you vote (but they can't tell you how to vote). These are not the only accommodations that you can have. If you need something else because of your disability, you will need to ask for it. You will have to tell the people working at the polls what you need and that you need it because of your disability.

**If you need something else because of your disability, you will need to ask for it.**

## How can I advocate for myself?

If someone tells you that you can't vote because you have a disability, there are ways you can advocate for yourself. For example, if someone says you can't vote because you have a guardian, you can tell them that people with guardians still have the right to vote. If someone says you can't vote because you can't write your name because of your disability, you can make a mark like an "X" instead of your name. If someone has told you that you can't vote because of your disability, you can contact Disability Rights Ohio immediately for help.

# SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRANSITION AGE YOUTH 14-21: What to Know About Voting

**Register:** You can register online at the Secretary of State's website, in-person at public places like libraries or your county's Board of Elections, or by mail.

**Prepare:** You can learn more about the issues and people you are voting for by looking for trusted sources, like a particular person or website.

**Vote:** You can vote in-person early, absentee by mail, or in-person on Election Day. If you plan to vote absentee by mail, you will need to send an application in online, by mail, or in-person at a public place. To vote, you will need to have an ID, like a driver's license or state ID card. If you don't have either, you can use something else with your name and current address on it like a utility bill or government check.

**Get Help Voting:** If you need help voting because of your disability, you can ask a poll worker or your county's Board of Elections. You can get help with the machines, marking your ballot, voting curbside, or signing your ballot.

**Advocate:** If someone says you cannot vote because of your disability, you can advocate for your rights! Having a guardian or a disability does not disqualify you from voting.



**REGISTER.**



**PREPARE.**



**VOTE.**

**QUICK TIPS**

**Disability Rights Ohio**

614-466-7264

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org)

# PREPARE: Make a Plan to Vote

## CHECK THE BOXES AND FILL IN THE BLANKS

Are you registered to vote at your current address?

YES

NO

If you said no, what is your plan?

AT COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

ONLINE

AT LIBRARY OR PUBLIC PLACE

BY MAIL

What ID will you use to vote?

How will you vote?

ABSENTEE BY MAIL

EARLY IN PERSON

IN-PERSON ON ELECTION DAY

If in-person, where will you vote? \_\_\_\_\_

If by mail, when is the last day you can send your ballot? \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

If you need help voting, what can you do?

**IF YOU NEED HELP ON ELECTION DAY, CALL DRO AT 614-466-7264**

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