NEW JERSEY FAMILY TRANSITION CHECKLIST

# Moving From School to Adult Services

A clear timeline for moving from school-based services into New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities services.

When your child turns 21, school-based services end. What comes next runs through the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and most families find it confusing the first time. This checklist lays out what to do and when, so nothing falls through the cracks.

| Ages 14 to 16 | Age 17 | Age 18 | A few months before 21 | Age 21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Spectrum Care Management and Counseling**

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THE TIMELINE

# Know what to do and when

## 14 to 16

### Build transition into the IEP

- [ ] Transition planning starts in the IEP. Ask the child study team whether the transition goals are specific enough.
- [ ] Start a folder for every evaluation, IEP, and medical record. You will need them later.

## 17

### Gather records before you need them

- [ ] Gather the documents in the checklist on page 3. Do not wait until 18.
- [ ] Talk to an attorney about guardianship or supported decision-making. At 18, your child is a legal adult.

## 18

### Do not wait on these

- [ ] Apply for DDD eligibility at nj.gov/humanservices/ddd. It can take up to 60 days to hear back.
- [ ] Expect the NJCAT meeting. After you apply, DDD schedules a meeting with you, in person, by video, or by phone, to complete the New Jersey Comprehensive Assessment Tool. For students in their last year of school, this usually happens in the fall or winter.
- [ ] Apply for Medicaid through NJ FamilyCare at njfamilycare.org. You need Medicaid to receive DDD services.
- [ ] Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the Social Security Administration.

## Before 21

### A few months before age 21

- [ ] Choose a support coordination agency. Get connected before school services end so there is no gap in services.
- [ ] Work with your support coordinator to develop the Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

## 21

### Adult services begin

- [ ] School services end. DDD adult services begin under the Supports Program or the Community Care Program.

> **Keep the tracks moving together:** school transition planning, DDD eligibility, Medicaid, SSI, and support coordination are connected, but each has its own process.

DOCUMENTS AND AGENCY CHOICE

# Prepare the file, then interview the agency

## Document checklist

Have copies of each of these ready before you apply for DDD:

- [ ] Most recent IEP and all evaluations
- [ ] Psychological, medical, and therapy records showing the disability began before age 22
- [ ] Birth certificate
- [ ] Social Security card
- [ ] Proof of New Jersey residency
- [ ] Guardianship or power of attorney paperwork, if applicable

## Keep one transition folder

Save a copy of every application, document, notice, and confirmation. Add the name and contact information of anyone you speak with.

### Important contacts

School case manager: _____

DDD contact: _____

Medicaid contact: _____

CHOOSING A SUPPORT COORDINATION AGENCY

**You choose the agency.** Not the school, not the state. And you can change agencies at any time if the fit is not right.

**Support coordination is a professional partnership.** Your coordinator connects your family with services and supports. A warm, trusting relationship matters, and clear boundaries help the coordinator remain objective and serve your family well.

## Questions worth asking any agency you consider

1. Will you attend transition meetings before age 21, and how will you help us prepare for the ISP?
2. Do you write and approve support plans in-house, or does that wait on someone outside the agency?
3. Can you walk us through how support coordination works, from assignment through the first Individualized Service Plan?
4. How often will our support coordinator contact us? When will visits be in person, and where do they take place?
5. What will our support coordinator handle, and what will still be our family's responsibility?
6. How will you help us find and compare providers and use the DDD budget around our family member's goals?
7. How do you monitor whether services are working, and what happens when something needs to change?
8. Who do we call between visits or when our support coordinator is unavailable, and how quickly can we expect a response?

FIRST CHOICE

_____

Why it fits

_____

SECOND CHOICE

_____

Why it fits

_____

THE ISP MEETING

# Prepare around the life your family member wants

The Individualized Service Plan is the document that decides which services get funded. It is the most important meeting in the process.

### Before the meeting, write down:

1. What a good day looks like for your family member right now.
2. What is not working and needs to change.
3. Two or three goals for the coming year, in plain language.
4. Services you want to keep, add, or drop, and why.

> **Bring your family member into it.** Even two or three sentences about what they want, such as “I want a job” or “I want to see my friends more,” carry real weight in the meeting.

KEY LINKS

**DDD eligibility and services**
nj.gov/humanservices/ddd

**Medicaid through NJ FamilyCare**
njfamilycare.org

**Social Security and SSI**
ssa.gov

Forms, timelines, and program rules can change. Check the official sites before submitting anything.

### Questions about transition?

Call Spectrum at **(973) 530-4155** or send us a message through the contact form on our website.

**spectrumcmc.com**

ABOUT SPECTRUM

Spectrum Care Management and Counseling provides support coordination to adults 21 and older across New Jersey. We have been doing this work since 2012, and we write and approve support plans in-house, which means faster turnaround for the families we serve.

### Three things to do next

- Start the transition folder
- Mark the age 18 applications
- Plan agency interviews

This checklist is a planning resource, not legal advice. Confirm current requirements with the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities and other responsible agencies.