

Adult Guardianship: Transition to Adulthood

What is adult guardianship?

- Parents are legal guardians of their child until the child turns 18. Every person is a legal adult at the age of 18 years. An adult is expected to make their own choices about important issues.
- Adults with a cognitive disability may not understand information well. This could keep them from making choices that are in their best interest.
- If an adult is not able to make choices about medical, legal or money issues, a guardian may be needed.
- An adult guardian is assigned through a legal process.

What do I need to know to help my child?

- During the teen years, start thinking about whether your child will need a guardian.
- You can talk with your child's health care provider, teacher, social worker or county case worker about the guardianship process in your state or county.
- Start working on the process at least 6 months before your teenager turns 18 years.
- Most parents hire a lawyer to help them through the process.
- Your teenager will likely need a competency evaluation. This may be done by a doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist. The purpose is to give the courts information about how well the adult will be able to make choices.

Resources:

- The high school transition coordinator often has good information about guardianship.
- The Neurology Clinic social worker is also a good resource.
- State agency for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs.
- State Department of Health & Human Services
- Websites:
 - Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance: Guardianship – www.tsalliance.org (search Guardianship)
 - Legal Zoom - <http://info.legalzoom.com/mother-father-legal-guardianship-adult-child-21645.html>