

Family Education Sheet

Planning for the Future and the Transition to Adult Health Care



Boston Children's Hospital

Where the world comes for answers

View more health education materials at
www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation

The Developmental Medicine Center at Boston Children's Hospital will help you move smoothly from pediatric (child-based) to adult healthcare. Transitioning to adult care takes several steps and it's different for every family. Our goal is to help you set health priorities and support you in your road to adulthood.

Starting **when you turn 14 years old**, our providers will start to prepare you and your caregivers for the change to adult healthcare.

You become a legal adult at age **18**. When you turn 18, we will only talk about your health information with other adults (like your parents) if you agree. We respect that many of our young adult patients still want their parents/caregivers involved in their care decisions. You will need to sign a consent form to allow your provider to share your health information with others. For young adults who have a condition that limits them from making health care decisions, we help families consider options for decision-making support. If you're considering guardianship, your provider will begin helping with this process by the time you're age 16.

Most of the children we see are ready to move to an adult provider by age 22. We'll guide you and collaborate with you and your caregivers in this process to ensure a smooth and safe transition of care. Your appointments with us over the transition will slowly focus more on the transition. We'll help (with your permission) as much as possible, forwarding all appropriate information to your new adult provider to support your behavioral, medical and mental health needs.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your provider at Boston Children's.

Definitions

- **Transition of care** is the process of moving from a pediatric (child-based) location of care to an adult location of care. This includes moving from pediatric care in the Developmental Medicine Center to a comparable adult provider. It may also mean transitioning care with related adult services, including but not limited to Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Social Security Income (SSI), Department of Mental Health (DMH), housing, education, day programs, working opportunities and health insurance.
- **Formal transfer age** is transferring age-appropriate care to meet all of your medical and community service needs. This age may be when you're 18-22 years old. A pediatric clinician will work with you and your family to decide the age you should officially transfer.
- **Consent form (release of information)** allows Boston Children's to release information to, discuss information with or receive information from others.
- **Guardianship** is a legal way to protect children and adults who can't care for themselves, make decisions (including health care decisions) that are in their own best interests or manage their assets. If a court finds that you can't handle your legal, personal and/or financial affairs, it will appoint a guardian. A guardian can be your parent(s) or another trusted adult.
- A **limited (also known as partial) guardianship** limits decision-making to certain areas, such as medical treatment. This type of guardianship can be tailored to fit your family's needs by allowing you to make your own decisions in all other areas.
- **Advanced directives and healthcare proxies** let you choose a healthcare agent (person). This person is allowed to make healthcare decisions if you become unable to make them. When you choose a health care agent, the agent must be competent or capable of making health care decisions themselves.
- **A durable power of attorney** grants a person the legal authority to make decisions on another's behalf.

This family education sheet is available in Spanish and Portuguese.