Turning 18 means making new decisions about your future. This Guide will point you toward people and resources you need to plan your future.

WWW.SUPPORTINGCHOICES.ORG
WWW.FDDC.ORG
WWW.GUARDIANTRUSTS.ORG

Turning 18 is a big deal!
Know your legal rights
Turning 18 means making new decisions about your future. You will make decisions about working and earning money; living on your own; choosing an educational plan to learn new skills or get a degree. You may want to find a new doctor or a new apartment. Or, you may want to leave everything in place the way it is right now. It’s good to have help making these decisions, and there are many people ready to support you. This Guide will point you toward those people and the resources you need to plan your future. Here are some of the rights you have as an adult, and some supports you can get.

Here is a list of your legal rights when you turn 18.

LEGAL RIGHTS

The right to make educational decisions
- You choose someone to make your educational decisions.
- Consider a joint bank account with your parent; then either of you can sign the checks.
- Direct deposit and online banking save time and trouble. You will make fewer trips to the bank.
- A Special Needs Trust can be set up to—invest certain kinds of money safely, and still receive federal assistance.

The right to work
- Tell your employer if you have a disability.
- Talk with job coaches or transition specialists.
- Visit different workplaces to see what they are like.

The right to choose a place to live
- There are many things to think about when choosing a place to live: budget, safety, access to public transportation, special accommodations, etc.
- Check online at the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council www.fddc.org for new developments in affordable housing.
- Watch the TV series House Hunters. If you are single, check www.houselogic.com for an apartment.

The right to sue and be sued
- When you want to take college courses.
- You must pay your bills on time. If you don’t, you might lose your cellphone service, utilities—even your apartment!
- If you need a car, you must bring that car to the road test. Passed a written test. If you need a car with a special modification, you must bring that car to the road test.

The right to choose your social life
- If someone in your circle of support suggests guardianship, ask if there are better choices.
- To get your rights back, you have to go back to court and show you are able to take care of these responsibilities.
- There are other ways and supports to keep you more independent.

The right to marry
- You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.
- Here are websites with information helpful when traveling with a disability. www.travelguides.org www.disabledworld.com/travel www.independenttraveler.com/travelrips/howto/travel/dischal
- Persons with disabilities have the same rules for getting a driver’s license as all others. The steps to take:
- Get a learner’s permit. 1. Apply for a learner’s permit.
- Take a place where you bring a friend. 2. Pass a road test.
- Get a valid license. 3. Pass a road test. You have to choose someone to take you to the road test.
- If you need a car with special modifications, you must bring that car to the road test.
- If you buy a used car, you also have to buy insurance.
- If you are financing the car (borrowing money to pay for it), you will need to sign a contract.
- If you need a car with special modifications, you must bring that car to the road test.

The right to choose a self advocate
- You are free to choose your friends, lifestyle, religion, entertainment, food to eat, exercise, etc.
- Remember that freedom comes with responsibility: stay healthy and safe, and enjoy your new freedom!

The right to be safe
- The laws about getting married are the same for people with disabilities.

LEGAL RIGHTS

SUPPORTS TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR PARENTS
- You can choose your own doctor or dentist if you wish. It is a good idea to ask friends, neighbors, or others for information and advice about new doctors before you choose.
- You need to conduct a "medical proxy" if you don’t fully understand your medical choices.
- You can ask your parent or trusted friend to become a “health care surrogate” to give you advice on medical decisions.
- You can give your friend or trusted friend durable power of attorney (DPOA) Then they can make medical decisions if you are unable to communicate.

The right to vote
- You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.

The right to get a bank account or debit card
- You must keep up with paperwork to get governmental benefits.
- If needed, you can ask a parent or other trusted person to become a representative payee to manage the cash benefits to take care of bank account and bank accounts for you.

The right to be given a joint bank account
- You can ask parents, friends, teachers, or others for information and advice about new doctors before you choose.
- You can give your friend or trusted friend durable power of attorney (DPOA) Then they can make medical decisions if you are unable to communicate.

The right to choose a person to make major decisions if you can’t
- Always try to talk with your parents about giving them power of attorney.
- You must talk with your parents about giving them power of attorney.
- Talk with your parents about giving them power of attorney.
- That’s important if you want to get governmental benefits.
- You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.

The right to receive special needs support
- Talk to your parents about giving them power of attorney.
- If you need a power of attorney (DPOA) you can get a joint bank account, Medicaid, social security, and governmental benefits.

IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS HARMING YOU, TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST OR CALL THE POLICE (911-1) OR THE FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE 1-800-926-3473

LEGAL RIGHTS

SUPPORTS TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR PARENTS
- You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE

It is important to think about goals that you can reach. Here are some questions you can ask when you are making decisions about work.

- What things do you like to do? Work with people? Work in an office?
- What things are you good at? Coding? Working with computers?
- Do you have family members who can help you do work?
- Do you need to plan to get certain jobs?
- Do you need to talk with your work and support people?
- Do you want to get into graduate school? There are many new programs available, including some that help you take college courses.

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

Most young people ask for advice and guidance from their parents when making important decisions. But you can also benefit from advice and assistance from many other people. These people are your circles of support.

People in your circle of support should know you: understand your likes and interests; know your strengths and capabilities; and support you to become more independent. Circles of support often include family members, trusted friends, someone from a place of worship, a teacher, a caregiver or service provider, a mentor or life coach, and others.

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SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP

- When a court assigns a person a legal guardian, all or some of their rights are taken away by a judge and given to the guardian.
- There are other ways and supports to keep you more independent.
- To get your rights back, you have to go back to court and show you are able to take care of these things yourself.
- Guardianship is an expensive process.
- If someone in your circle of support supports guardianship, ask if there are better choices.

KEEPING SAFE

With your new independence, you need to be safe from harm who don’t care about you.

- Abuse is when someone bullies you, threatens you, or hurts you.
- Neglect is when someone is not taking good care of you, like not feeding you well, or not keeping the house clean.
- Exploitation is when someone is trying to get you to do something for them that isn’t good for you, like taking your money and not returning it, or trying to make you do something sexual that makes you uncomfortable.

INTERNET EXPLOITATION: is a danger for everyone. Don’t give out addresses, phone numbers, social security numbers, debit card numbers, or any other personal information unless you know it is safe. See these are some safe sites: job applications, government benefits, online stores like Amazon and eBay.

WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

Someone calls you names, makes fun of you, or threatens to hurt you.

Someone hurts you, punches you, beats you.

Someone doesn’t like the way you live, or give them back.

Someone tells you they will tell people about your personal information.

Someone touches you, sexual or against your will.

Someone encourages you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.

A person gets upset when you don’t do what they want you to do.

A person asks you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.

Someone encourages you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.

Someone you know you don’t want to be near.

You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.

You can ask your parent or trusted friend to become a "health care surrogate" to give you advice on medical decisions.

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**LEGAL RIGHTS**

**SUPPORTS TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR PARENTS**

- You choose someone to make your education decisions.
- You choose who will make your medical decisions.
- You can ask your parent or trusted friend to become a ‘health care surrogate’ to give you advice on medical decisions.
- You can ask your parent or trusted friend to become a representative payee to manage the cash benefits to take care of paper work and bank accounts.
- You must keep up with paperwork to get governmental benefits. If needed, you can ask a parent or other trusted person to become a representative payee to manage the pay checks to take care of paper work and bank accounts for you.
- You need to have a Florida ID or birth certificate to register to vote.

**MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE**

- You can see your own doctor or dentist or the medicines to take.
- You can choose your own doctor or dentist if you wish. It is a good idea to ask friends, trends, teachers, or others for information and advice about new doctors before you choose.
- You can ask your parent or trusted friend to become a ‘health care surrogate’ to give you advice on medical decisions.
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**SUPPORTS TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOUR PARENTS**

- You have the right to choose a place to live.
- You have the right to make educational decisions.
- You have the right to a bank account or debit card.
- You have the right to choose a place to live.
- You have the right to sue.

**MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE**

- You have the right to sign different workplaces to see what they are like.
- You must pay your bills on time gives you a good reputation.
- You are free to choose your social life.
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MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WORK AND SOCIAL LIFE

It is important to make goals that you can reach. Here are some questions you can ask when you are making decisions about work.

- What things do you like about work?
- What work would you do for free?
- What is your long-term goal in work?
- Do you have any work skills or experience?
- Do you need to pass a test for certain jobs?
- Do you need to see a doctor or dentist before you can work?
- Do you need to take some classes or training?
- Do you need to get more education in a certain area?
- Do you need to find work near your home or school?
- Do you need to find work near your friends?
- Do you need to find work near your family?
- Do you need to find work near your church or synagogue?
- Do you need to find work near your school or college?
- Do you need to find work near your gym or sports team?
- Do you need to find work near your transportation hub or transit stop?
- Do you need to find work near your bank or credit union?
- Do you need to find work near your post office or post box?
- Do you need to find work near your phone company or internet service provider?
- Do you need to find work near your library or bookstore?
- Do you need to find work near your supermarket or grocery store?
- Do you need to find work near your doctor or dentist?
- Do you need to find work near your attorney or legal advisor?
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Know your legal rights

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STUDENT GUIDE TO LEGAL RIGHTS

Turning 18 means making new decisions about your future. This Guide will point you toward people and resources you need to plan your future.