



Special Needs Planning PARENT'S TIMELINE



A Parent's Guide

Legal and Financial Planning For Children and Young Adults with Special Needs

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Birth

LEGAL

- Consult a Special Needs Planning Attorney to establish Estate Plans (Wills, Special Needs Trust, Letter of Intent) to address the child's future. This is a critical step, even if you are not sure whether your child will need long term assistance. Estate Planning is a good idea for all families, not just special needs families.
- Contact the state Child and Family Connections office (800-323-4769) to find out if your child qualifies for Early Intervention ("EI") therapies and services. EI provides in-home therapies and services to your child and can help establish services when your child transitions to school.
- Do not title assets in your child's name; be sure that you also tell your family members not to title assets in your child's name.
- Register your child on the "PUNS" list. State funds are available to those with developmental disabilities - however, services are allocated based on severity and urgency of need. <https://www.illinois.gov/dd/Pages/SignUp.aspx> or call 1-88-DD-PLANS.
- Keep good records of IEPs, diagnoses records and professional test results. These records will be critical when it is time to apply for governmental benefits.

FINANCIAL

- Consult with a Financial Planner who *specializes* in special needs. You will need to plan differently for your family and child, and by starting early, you have the advantage of time.
- Do not title assets in your child's name; tell your family members they should not title any assets in the child's name.

LEGAL AND FINANCIAL

Age 12

- Review your Estate Plan, Special Needs Plan, and Financial Plan - you should review these plans and documents at least every 5 years. If you have not yet prepared these plans, it's time to get started.
- Confirm that your child does not have assets titled in his or her name.
- Transition planning officially begins at age 14 1/2, but have it on your radar earlier. Educate yourself on the options available in your district, or consider hiring an advocate.



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Age
17 to 24

LEGAL

- Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid upon age 18.
- Consider applying to the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for home based services and/or respite assistance. This is a separate option from the PUNS list.
- Consider whether to apply for guardianship of your child when he or she turns age 18. Powers of Attorney are an alternative. Your Special Needs Attorney can guide you through this decision.
- Complete an Education Power of Attorney so you can be sure to be included in your child's IEP and Transition Planning meetings.
- Did your child receive survivor's benefits for a minor child? If so, evaluate whether he or she can qualify for the benefits to continue as an adult.
- Is either parent deceased, disabled and receiving SSDI, or retired? If so the child may qualify for Childhood Disability Benefits (referred to as "CDB benefits"). It is critical to prove that the child had his or her disability prior to age 22 to qualify.
- Review your Estate Plan, Special Needs Plan, and Financial Plan. You should review these plans at least every 5 years.
- Evaluate the family supports annually, and revisit when a parent or caregiver passes away. Evaluate for SSDI and Medicare eligibility.
- Begin thinking about and planning long term living arrangements; consult your attorney for more information.

FINANCIAL

- At age 17, review your child's finances to ensure assets do not exceed \$2,000.
- Encourage your child to work even if it is a very minimal amount of time because some benefits are based on work history/credits.
- If SSI has been awarded, be sure that you understand the rules around how monies can be spent. This is also true for Special Needs Trusts and ABLE accounts.
- Ensure your own plans for retirement are on track. If your adult child is now working, even part-time, be sure you know the rules on earning income and how to organize bank accounts and/or an ABLE account.
- Review your financial plan, especially if SSI or other benefits have been awarded to your child.
- Continue to monitor your child's accounts to be sure they do not exceed \$2,000.

Contact your Special Needs Planning Attorney and Financial Advisor and cross these items off your list!

This Guide is not intended to replace thorough, qualified advice that a Special Needs Attorney or Financial Advisor can provide for your family's unique needs. Please use this information as a guide only, and contact a professional if you have questions or wish to begin creating your own financial or legal plan.