



Transition to Adult Health Care

What does health transition mean?

Health transition means moving from pediatric health care to adult health care. When we talk about health transition, that includes:

- Finding the right adult providers (doctors, specialists, therapists)
- Finding new health insurance once your child is too old to stay on your family plan or children's Medicaid
- Educating your child about their health needs
- Teaching your child to self advocate and self manage their health care needs
- Advocating for your child's health care

What is a health transition plan?

This is a plan that most often is drawn up by you (parent/caregiver) working in collaboration with your child's pediatrician and other health care providers.

What does a health transition plan look like? What information does it include?

There is no set format for a health transition plan. The plan is individualized and can look very different depending on the type and the scope of your child's health issues. The plan should include a brief medical history or summary, a list of your child's current medications, your child's health insurance information, your child's goals about self management and self advocacy (if applicable), information about legal issues (such as power of attorney or guardianship), and health-related goals that should be included in your child's IEP, etc.

Who makes up the transition team?

Your child is at the center of the team. Other team members include you, the parents, other family members, your child's current pediatrician and pediatric specialists, his/her teachers, and providers and specialists who cater to the adult population.

Why is health transition important?

Being in good health is a key ingredient to your child's success. Having a health transition plan will ensure that your child is not left without medical coverage once he/she is an adult.

The facts you should know:

- A health care transition plan is not required, but it can be helpful for your child and your family.
- The team members of a health transition plan may not be able to meet at one place to discuss goals of the plan.
- As the parent/caregiver, you will have to initiate, coordinate and collaborate with other team members in order to make and implement the plan.
- As a parent/caregiver you will serve as the bridge that connects your child's pediatric doctors and specialists to new doctors and specialists that cater to the adult population.

When your child turns 18:

- He/she is an adult and, by law, can make medical decisions on their own.
- As a parent/caregiver you might need formal documentation or explicit permission from your child in order to be a part of their health care decisions.
 - Formal documentation can range from Health Care Power of Attorney to full guardianship. Choosing the right type of formal support can be complicated, make sure you speak to an attorney.

- Informal supports can involve a network of family and friends providing help and guidance. It is important to recognize that these informal networks must still operate within privacy laws.

Tips for Families:

- Start early! At or before the age of 14 start thinking about transitioning from your child's pediatrician to an adult health care provider.
- Create a 1-2 page medical summary. Put all important information about your child's health care in one place. Ask your doctor for help and keep the information up-to-date. Give new health care providers a copy of the summary, so they will know all the important details about your child's medical history.
- Begin to teach your child self management skills. Help your child understand their own health condition, treatment and necessary interventions. Teach your child the skills needed for them to take charge of their own health.
- Encourage your child to advocate for him/herself. Help your child to prepare their own questions to ask their doctor. Give your child some alone time with his/her doctor to ask these and other questions.
- Create a Health Transition Plan. Make a list of things "my child can do" and short, medium, and long range goals for your child as a starting point to creating a transition plan. Talk to your child. Ask for his/her input into their health care planning. Ask what they want and need to feel supported.
- Work in close collaboration with your child's current pediatrician. Ask your child's pediatrician for referrals to adult health providers.
- Set up a plan for continuous communication with your child's doctor's office.
- Make sure health goals are included in your child's IEP, as part of their transition plan.
- Remember, if your child is on your health insurance plan, the new health care law allows your child to remain on your plan until he/she turns 26. Call your health insurance company for details. If your child is on Medicaid they will have to reapply once they turn 18.
- Remember that even if your child was not eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in the past, they might be eligible once they turn 18. The eligibility requirements for an adult differ from those of a child. In Georgia, if your child is approved for SSI they will automatically qualify for Medicaid.
- Connect with support groups or organizations that can match you with other families who have children with similar special health needs, to help you identify doctors and providers that serve the adult population.
- Find new healthcare providers. Schedule an interview visit with potential providers before you make a final decision.
- Don't forget to transfer your child's medical records to his/her new doctors. Once you have chosen a provider ask your child's pediatrician to transfer his/her medical records to the new provider. Do this before your child's first appointment with the new provider.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia

770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038

www.p2pga.org

