

## Age of Majority Notification

When you turn 18, according to Michigan laws, you reach the age of majority. You are then considered an adult. Another law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, requires that if you are a student who receives services to assist you in school because you have an educational disability, at age 18, all rights and responsibilities covered by this law are transferred to you as an adult student. The only reason why this would not happen is if the court has given you a guardian.

Every year you will meet with your school team to develop a plan of services called your Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Your parents have been doing this with you for several years, but now you will have a new role as a young adult. It is now your job to speak for yourself and to make the decisions about your school services.

Reaching the Age of Majority means two things – you have a whole new set of Rights and Responsibilities.

By law, your Rights include:

### Giving Consent:

Before –

- any evaluation can be done for you
- a change in your special education services can be made
- your records can be sent to someone else

These things must happen –

1. Someone must tell you about the evaluation or the change in a way that you will understand.
2. You must agree in writing, usually by signing a form or letter.
3. You must be told that you have a choice (it is a voluntary agreement) and you can change your mind at any time.

### Prior Notice:

Your school must tell you, in writing, any time it wants to change your special education services. If you have trouble reading, the school must have someone tell you so that you will understand.

### Evaluation Procedures:

At least every three years you will work with school staff to complete an evaluation, called the “multidisciplinary evaluation”, or MET, to see if you are eligible for special education services. Your rights include:

- An interpreter or translator if you are deaf, hearing impaired, visually impaired or if you speak another language. Tests must be given in a way so that you can give accurate answers.
- Tests cannot discriminate on the basis of race, language or cultural background.
- The correct tests have to be given according to the instructions by someone who is well trained. People who are trained and understand your disability must do your evaluation.
- Even though it might take a little longer, there needs to be at least a couple of tests or measures to make sure that there is enough information to make any decisions that are needed.
- If you are going to take Vocational Education, you must also have a vocational evaluation.
- You must be given the opportunity to tell people what you know about your disability as well as your strengths and abilities. Your parents can also give information to evaluators if you want.
- When the evaluation is done, all of the information must be shared with you so that you can help make any decisions that need to be made by the multidisciplinary team... That is because you are a member of the team.

### Continuum of Services:

The law is very clear that you and your school IEP team must consider more than one option when planning your school program. You need to work with school staff to find the best choice.

### Access to Records:

You have a right to see any records that your school keeps about you. You may also request that information that you believe is not accurate or violates your rights be removed from your file. You must give permission for records to be shared with other people outside of the school district.

### Disagreements:

If you disagree with decisions that are made by your school team, there are lots of things that you should do. The first thing is to *tell someone* on your team, or ask someone else, like your parents or a friend, to help.

The law also gives you rights, which include:

1. Independent Evaluation: This is an evaluation that is done by someone who is not employed by your school district. Independent evaluations are most often done when you disagree with the results of your MET evaluation, and will be paid for by the school, unless they are able to show a hearing officer that the evaluation they completed is appropriate. Results of any evaluation you request must be considered when you and your IEP members make decisions.
2. Mediation: This is an opportunity to sit down with a trained mediator who will help everyone solve the problems that have created the disagreement. Everyone must agree to do this and keep the information private.
3. Hearings and Appeals: There are several ways that you can disagree that involve hearing officers, lawyers, even appeals to the Michigan Department of Education.
4. Complaints: Complaints about the service that you receive can be made to the Eaton Intermediate School District (EISD) if you haven't been able to solve problems by talking to your teachers or other school staff.

The basic message here is that you don't have to sign anything before you understand, and you do not have to agree to sign forms if you disagree with your plan of services (IEP). You have rights and protections under the law.

### **Responsibilities**

And with rights come responsibilities. In order for all of this to work right, there are some things that you need to do:

- *Follow timelines* – If you need to respond to the school, you will be told in writing. Don't miss deadlines because they are usually very important.
- *Have goals and ideas* – You will build a good school program on them.
- *Get the support that you need* – If you need help reading the letters that are sent to you or help in understanding information...ASK SOMEONE that you trust.
- *Tell people about yourself and your ideas* – You are an adult member of the team.
- *Take time to listen to what people tell you about your strengths and abilities* – It is how you can all work together to make good decisions.
- *Learn about your disability* – Know what works best for you and what kind of support you need. In the future, people will only provide them if you ask.
- *Disagreement is OK* – Work with your team to solve the problems. The solutions are there.
- *Be your own advocate* – Get to know yourself and teach others.

### **Congratulations on Reaching the Age of Majority!**

Ask us, we'll help where we can.