

## Reaching the Age of Majority

### What is the Age of Majority?

When you turn 18, according to Michigan laws, you reach the age of majority. You are then considered an adult. If you are a student receiving services to assist you in school because you have an educational disability, all rights and responsibilities covered by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, are transferred to you as an adult student, unless you have a court appointed guardian.

As you read this document, it is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities. Have someone you trust explain them to you to be sure you know what they mean.

### What are your rights when you reach the Age of Majority?

- You have the right to **Speak for Yourself** at your IEP and make the decisions about your school services. (Your parents or guardian may attend if you want them to.)
- You must **Give** your **Consent** (permission) in writing, before any evaluation can be done for you or a change in your special education services can be made. (Someone from the school must explain the evaluation or change to you in a way you understand and tell you that you have a choice and that you can change your mind at any time.)
- You must **Give** your **Consent** before your school records can be sent to anyone else.
- You must be given **Prior Notice** by the school, 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.
- You and your school IEP team must consider **more than one option** when planning your school program. You need to work with the school staff to find the best choice for you.
- You have the **right to see any records** that the school keeps about you. If you think the information is not accurate, or violates your rights, you may request that the information be removed from your file.
- You have many rights about how **evaluations** about you are done. See the attached page describing your rights for Evaluation Procedures.
- You have the right to **disagree** with decisions made by your school team. Don't sign anything you don't understand, and if you disagree with the plan, you don't have to sign it. There are things you can do. See the attached page describing the procedures you can take when you disagree with your planning team.

## What are your Responsibilities when you reach the Age of Majority?

You also have responsibilities when you become an adult student. Your responsibilities are to:

- **Be your own advocate** – This means understanding what your needs are and being able to ask for them. Let your IEP team members and others know what you want. It is your IEP.
- **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.

## Congratulations on reaching the Age of Majority!

The attached page gives more details about your rights as they relate to evaluations. It also explains your rights when you disagree with your school program. Have someone you trust explain these rights to you if you do not understand them.

### 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 tests have to be given according to the instructions and by someone who is well trained in the test’s procedures. 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 decisions.
- 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. If you wish, your parents can also give information to evaluators.
- When the evaluation is done, all of the information must be shared with you so that you can help make decisions that need to be made by the multidisciplinary team...because you are a member of the team.

### **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 not 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 confidential (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 you receive can be made to your school district if you haven’t been able to solve problems by talking to your teachers or other school staff.

You don’t have to sign anything before you understand, and you do not have to sign forms if you disagree with your plan of services (IEP). You have rights and protections under the law.