

Turning 18: Benefits Transition Checklist

A practical plan for SSI, Medicaid, school transition, adult services, work, and decision-making.

Start early.

Turning 18 changes the rules, but not every change happens automatically on the birthday. Use this guide to assign each task, save proof, and follow the exact deadlines in every notice.

When	What to do
12–6 months before	Build the case file. Request updated medical, psychological, school, therapy, and functional records. Review the IEP transition plan.
6–3 months before	Confirm Medicaid's adult coverage pathway. Contact Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation and DBHDD if their services may fit.
At age 18	Update agency contacts and permissions. Watch for Social Security and Georgia Gateway notices. Track the young adult's own income and resources.
After each notice	Mark the decision, effective date, appeal deadline, and next action. Keep the envelope and submission proof.

Georgia Benefits Support

Independent Benefits Navigation for Georgia Families

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1 · SOCIAL SECURITY

Prepare for the adult standard

Build the SSI age-18 review around function

If a young person received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a child, Social Security must redetermine disability under the adult rules during the year after the 18th birthday. This is a new adult-standard decision, not a medical-improvement review.[1]

Before Social Security contacts you

- List every diagnosis, medication, side effect, provider, hospital visit, therapy, and test.
- Request current records that describe limits in stamina, concentration, communication, self-care, behavior, mobility, and task completion.
- Save the current Individualized Education Program (IEP), evaluations, attendance, accommodations, transition plan, and work-training records.
- Write a typical-week summary: help needed, reminders, supervision, bad days, safety risks, and recovery time.
- Confirm Social Security has the correct address, phone number, and representative-payee information.

When the review starts

- Complete every form by the notice deadline; ask for help or an extension before it expires if needed.
- Give complete provider and school contact details; do not rely on a diagnosis alone.
- Attend any consultative examination Social Security schedules.
- Report school, vocational-rehabilitation, and work activity accurately.
- Keep a copy of every form, attachment, fax confirmation, upload receipt, and call note.

Financial rules also change

Parental deeming generally stops beginning with the month after the month the young adult attains age 18.[2] Social Security then looks at the adult's own living arrangement, income, and resources. If the young adult did not qualify for SSI as a child because parental income or resources were too high, ask Social Security whether to file as an adult.

- Inventory all accounts, cash, investments, property, income, and help with food or shelter in the young adult's name.
- Keep wage stubs and report work as Social Security instructs.
- Ask about the Student Earned Income Exclusion, Plan to Achieve Self-Support, impairment-related work expenses, and other work incentives.

If SSI stops for medical reasons

The notice explains appeal rights. Social Security says a written appeal is generally due within 60 days of receipt. To request statutory benefit continuation during the appeal, the appeal and continuation request must be made within 10 days of receipt; continued payments may have to be repaid if the appeal is unsuccessful.[3]

Section 301 may matter

If the young adult was already participating in an IEP, vocational rehabilitation, or a similar qualifying program before Social Security decided disability ended, ask whether Section 301 can continue benefits while the program is completed.[3]

Write it down: SSA notice received _____ | Appeal due _____

2 · HEALTH COVERAGE & SERVICES

Prevent avoidable gaps

Confirm the adult pathway before pediatric eligibility ends

Georgia Medicaid

Do not assume a child Medicaid category will convert automatically. Georgia considers age, disability, income, assets, and other factors when deciding coverage.[5]

- Check the renewal date and contact details in Georgia Gateway.
- Ask which adult Medicaid category will be reviewed and what proof is needed.
- Save the application or renewal confirmation number.
- Read the full eligibility notice and appeal instructions.

Katie Beckett transition

Georgia's TEFRA/Katie Beckett pathway is for certain children age 18 or younger who meet disability, level-of-care, home-care, and cost-effectiveness rules.[4]

- Before the 19th birthday, ask the Katie Beckett team which adult pathway may fit.
- Do not skip a current renewal while transition planning is underway.
- Keep recent level-of-care, medical, therapy, and support records.

Developmental-disability services

Georgia's New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) provide home- and community-based services for eligible people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Applications go through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). Eligibility is determined separately from SSI and school services.[6]

- Apply through the DBHDD Regional Field Office or the official individual portal; do not wait for school exit.
- Gather the application, psychological evaluation, medical history, and signed release requested by DBHDD.
- If placed on the Planning List, keep contact information current and report changes in health, behavior, safety, caregiver capacity, housing, or natural supports.
- Ask whether state-funded services may be available while waiver resources are pending.

Health-care handoff

Providers

- Ask each pediatric provider when care ends.
- Identify adult primary and specialty providers.
- Transfer records, medication lists, care plans, and equipment orders.
- Confirm who accepts the adult coverage plan.

Access & privacy

- Ask each provider which consent or release forms are needed after 18.
- Update emergency contacts and communication preferences.
- Make a one-page health summary and crisis plan.
- Confirm pharmacy, prior authorizations, and supply renewals.

Do not cancel current coverage

Do not cancel current coverage because another application is pending. Wait for written eligibility and effective-date information, and follow the exact instructions in each notice.

Write it down: Medicaid renewal _____ | Adult provider handoff _____

3 · ADULT-LIFE SUPPORT PLAN

School, work, money & decisions

Coordinate the systems that do not coordinate themselves

IEP and school transition

In Georgia, transition planning must begin by entry into ninth grade or age 16, whichever comes first, unless the IEP team starts earlier.[8]

- Make post-school goals measurable: training, education, employment, and independent living as appropriate.
- Invite the student and, with consent, agencies likely to provide transition services.
- Ask who owns each action, what will happen, and by what date.
- Request final evaluations, records, assistive-technology details, and a summary of performance before school exit.

Decision-making and authority

At 18, the young adult's legal and educational decision-making role changes. Match support to the person's actual needs and preserve as much choice as possible.

- Ask the school to explain transfer of education rights.
- Discuss supported decision-making, releases, powers of attorney, health-care planning, representative payee, and guardianship or conservatorship only as relevant.
- Use qualified Georgia legal advice before signing or filing legal documents; these options are not interchangeable.

Vocational rehabilitation

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) offers transition services beginning at age 14, including Pre-Employment Transition Services and help moving toward training or competitive integrated employment.[7]

- Ask the school for its GVRA transition contact.
- Discuss job exploration, work-based learning, workplace readiness, postsecondary counseling, and self-advocacy.
- If applying for VR, keep the eligibility decision and Individualized Plan for Employment.

Work and safe saving

In 2026, an SSI recipient under 22 who regularly attends school may qualify for the Student Earned Income Exclusion: up to \$2,410 per month, capped at \$9,730 for the year.[9]

- Get benefits counseling before major work or earnings changes.
- Report wages and keep every pay stub.
- Consider whether Georgia STABLE, the state's ABLE program, fits. In 2026, eligibility generally requires disability onset before age 46 plus SSI/SSDI eligibility or qualifying physician certification.[10]
- Get specialized advice before moving money, inheritance, or settlements.

Childhood disability benefits

Also ask Social Security about childhood disability benefits on a parent's record if the disability began before age 22 and a parent is retired, disabled, or deceased. This is different from SSI and requires a separate eligibility review.[11]

Young adult's own goals

I want help _____ My top goal this year is _____
with _____

The people I want on my support team are _____

Best next meeting: _____ with _____

4 · MASTER TRACKER

One owner, one deadline, proof saved

Use one transition case file

Put the young adult's goals first, then assign every open task. A submitted form is not finished until you save proof and read the decision.

Task or decision	Owner / contact	Due date	Proof / result
SSI age-18 review			
Medicaid adult pathway / renewal			
DBHDD / NOW-COMP			
IEP transition / school exit			
GVRA / employment plan			
Adult medical providers			
Decision-making documents			
Work incentives / savings plan			

Case-file inventory

- Photo ID, birth certificate, Social Security card
- Benefits cards and current award notices
- Medical summary, provider list, medications
- Psychological and adaptive-functioning evaluations
- IEP, transition plan, school evaluations
- Therapy, behavior, and support plans
- Income, resources, bank, and wage records
- Applications, confirmations, notices, appeals
- Release and decision-making documents

Key contacts

Social Security
1-800-772-1213 | Use the local office shown on the notice

Georgia Gateway / DFCS
1-877-423-4746 | gateway.ga.gov

GVRA
1-844-367-4872

DBHDD
Use the Regional Field Office serving the county

Georgia Benefits Support
info@georgiabenefitssupport.com

Next review date: _____ Person responsible: _____

OFFICIAL SOURCES & NOTES

Verify details before acting

Keep the source and the conversation together

Rules change. Use the official pages below, the current agency notice, and a written call log to confirm what applies to this young adult.

- 1 SSA POMS: Requirements for an Age-18 Redetermination
- 2 SSA POMS: Parent-to-child deeming ends after age 18
- 3 SSA Youth: Section 301 and statutory benefit continuation
- 4 Georgia Medicaid: TEFRA/Katie Beckett
- 5 Georgia Medicaid: How to Apply
- 6 DBHDD: Apply for Developmental Disability Services
- 7 GVRA: Transition Services
- 8 Georgia special education rule: Individualized Education Program
- 9 SSA: 2026 Student Earned Income Exclusion
- 10 Georgia STABLE: Eligibility
- 11 SSA: Benefits for adults with a disability that began before age 22

Agency call log

Date / agency	Person / reference	Next date	What I was told / next action

Before ending a call

Repeat the next action and deadline back to the representative. Ask for a confirmation or reference number. Record how documents should be submitted and what proof to keep.

Independent information: Georgia Benefits Support is not a government agency or law firm. This checklist does not determine eligibility, guarantee approval, or provide legal advice. Program rules and individual notices control. Information reviewed October 2026.

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