

Know Your Rights: Guardianship Alternatives

ARE YOU TURNING 18? DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY? DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT GUARDIANSHIP?

You do not need a guardian just because you have a disability and turn 18. Having a disability or an intellectual, cognitive, or mental health challenge does not mean you cannot make decisions for yourself.

Guardianship alternatives can help you keep your rights and work toward independence, while allowing you to receive the support and help you need while you transition to adulthood after you turn 18.

A guardianship is a court order where a judge chooses someone to make decisions for you and take care of you. There are lots of alternatives to guardianship and one might work for you.

As an adult, you have a right to ask questions, make decisions, and try to do things independently when you can. You might want to go to college or get a part-time job or learn how to drive. You can pick people to help you understand and make these choices.

There are a lot of ways you can choose a person to help you understand and make decisions without having a guardian:

- If you receive Social Security, and need help with managing your money, a representative payee can be appointed.
- If you need help with Medicaid, you can choose an authorized representative.
- If you need help making other choices, getting information or understanding your options, you can sign a supported decision-making agreement and choose a supporter. You can choose more than one person as a supporter.
- If you want someone to make decisions for you in certain situations, you can choose an agent in a durable power of attorney or medical power of attorney.
- You can talk to a lawyer, your parents, teachers, therapists, or other adults to help figure out what works for you.
- You have LOTS of choices!