

Transition Information: Mississippi

Timeline

- *By the age of 14:*
 - The IEP must include transition services for students with disabilities beginning at age 14 or younger and must be updated annually at the annual IEP meetings.
- *By the age of 16:*
 - The IEP including services in the areas of instruction, community involvement, vocational training, employment, independent living and the development of independent living skills must go into effect by the age of 16.
 - The vocational rehabilitation process should begin at least 2 years prior to high school graduation.
- *Before the age of 18:*
 - Apply for Social Security benefits, Social Security Disability Insurance and Medicaid.
 - If ineligible for Medicaid, look into other health insurance options, as it is likely the individual will no longer be covered by the parents plan after age 19 if not enrolled in college or covered by Medicaid.
 - Add your name to the waiting list for residential placements in the state. Regardless of future residential plans, it is good to be on the waitlist, as these lists can be extremely long, and it is easy to remove your name than it is to add it.
- *At age 18:*
 - Register to vote.
 - Male students should register for the draft, no matter the level of functioning.
 - If applicable, individuals should apply to adult agencies for vocational and day programs, as well as for supported living.
- *Before the age of 21:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. Unlike most states, **the age of majority in Mississippi is 21.**
 - They should be informed of this transfer well before they turn 21 and be aware and capable of making the decisions that they have to make, including financial and medical decisions.

Starting the Transition Services:

The IEP must include transition services for students with disabilities beginning at age 14 or younger. It must be updated annually at the annual IEP meetings, depending on the completion of the IEP's annual goals and the progress that the student is making towards achieving the desired and predicted skill set required to complete his/her IEP goals. This should include services in the areas of instruction, community involvement, vocational training, employment, independent living and the development of independent living skills. The IEP must go into effect with all the information above by the age of 16.

Education:

The IEP should include information about future coursework which should be specific towards the graduation plan decided and written within the student's IEP. It should also include the plans for any form of future education, including going to college or using vocational training.

In terms of graduation, the state provides minimum requirements for graduation, but LEAs can add to those requirements. There are many diploma options for students with disabilities, such as the regular standard high school diploma, a certificate of attendance or an occupational diploma. However, the state of Mississippi does not provide any allowances for any student to receive the standard diploma. Mississippi does have a state exit exam to graduate from high school. The same test is administered to all students and the passing score is the same across the board. If a student fails the exam, he or she can retake the same exam up to three times.

Guardianship/Conservatorship:

The age of majority in Mississippi is 21 years old. At this age, all rights to make decisions about the welfare of the disabled individual will transfer from their parents or legal guardians to themselves. They should be informed of this transfer well before they turn 21 and be aware and capable of making the decisions that they have to make, including financial and medical decisions. If their families feel that they are incapable of making that decision, they can petition for guardianship or conservatorship in a local court, which will then be presented in front of a judge or jury to decide whether it is necessary. This should also be done well before the student's 21st birthday so that when they turn 21, the new guardianship is already approved. If possible, it is best for the individual to choose his own guardian, but otherwise a guardian can petition to be appointed for that individual.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

Some of the services they provide include services related to career exploration and skills assessment. They also are involved in the federally-funded “Ticket to Work” program and also gave advice on social security benefit. By meeting with a VR counselor, one can assess the need for vocational rehabilitation at this point in a student’s life and determine a plan for what actions the student needs to take in order to achieve their goals.

Social Security:

Benefits should be applied for before the student’s 18th birthday and then be re-evaluated after the student’s 18th birthday. It is also important that the office be contacted well in advance before the student’s 18th birthday to understand that eligibility and application process.

Applicants may apply online or by contacting Social Security directly. Local Social Security offices can be found using SSA's office locator or by calling 800-772-1213.

- *Social Security Administration:* www.socialsecurity.gov
- *Social Security Benefit Application:* www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityonline
- *Social Security Benefits for People with Disabilities:* www.ssa.gov/disability
- *Social Security Office Locator:* <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

Housing Resources:

Mississippi Public Housing Agency Contact Information:
www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ms.cfm

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Mississippi
<http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/mississippi>

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:
www.disability.gov/resource/disability-govs-guide-housing

Mississippi Resources

Mississippi Office of Special Education

Department of Education

Office Number: 601-359-3498

Parent Hotline: 1-877-544-0408

www.mde.k12.ms.us/OSE

Mississippi Office of Special Education: Secondary Transition Model

www.mde.k12.ms.us/OSE/STS/secondary-transition-model

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation: www.mdrs.ms.gov/VocationalRehab

Transition Services Program: www.mdrs.ms.gov/VocationalRehab/Pages/Transition.aspx

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services

Mississippi Department of Mental Health

www.dmh.ms.gov/service-options/idd-services