

Into Adulthood: Your Guide to Disability Access

About the Minnesota Disability Law Center

The Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid is Minnesota's Protection and Advocacy organization. We help people with disabilities in Minnesota who have civil legal problems. We help people of any age with any type of disability. We don't charge for our legal services and your income doesn't matter when it comes to eligibility. MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed in this guide or if you are denied services.

The Client Assistance Project (CAP) is one part of MDLC's work. We help people who applied for or are getting services from Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) or State Services for the Blind (SSB). We may be able to advise you about your legal rights, negotiate with VRS or SSB for you or represent you in mediations or hearings, depending on what is needed for your case. CAP is independent from VRS and SSB. CAP does not provide vocational rehabilitation services like counseling, education, training or equipment.

If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 1-800-292-4150, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30-noon. Learn more about MDLC at www.mndlc.org. Read more about your legal rights at www.lawhelpmn.org.

MDLC is a statewide project of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid.

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Introduction

Moving into adulthood can be overwhelming. It's important to know supports are available to help you to be as independent as you want to be and can be. A good place to start — in making the transition to living on your own, working in the community and seeing friends — is with a transition planning assessment. (See pages 16-18). MDLC put together this guide to help young people with disabilities (ages 14-24) and their families understand some of the programs and services that are available beyond high school and sometimes a family home.

Federal and state laws and policies, including Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, support your right to live, work and interact in the community as you want, within some limits.

This guide can help you figure out if a program or service may be able help you. The list of resources in this guide are grouped together in categories. Some resources are in more than one category. At the end of the guide, see a list of agencies and their contact information. Also see tips for how to best communicate with agencies.

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Notes About This Guide

This guide does not talk about policies or resources related to COVID-19. For more information related to COVID-19 and your rights, go to <https://www.lawhelpmn.org/self-help-library/legal-resource/because-your-health-matters-minnesotas-coverage-covid-19>.

Programs and resources can change without notice. Be sure to check current information when you need help. This guide can help you find possible resources. However, it is not legal advice.

If you need this guide in another format, contact us at 1-800-292-4150.

If you or anyone in your family identifies as "undocumented," or as "someone without papers," "an immigrant" or "someone who gets DACA," you may be eligible for certain benefits in this guide.

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid's services are completely confidential. We do not report the immigration status of the people who contact us for advice or services.

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Health Insurance

Health insurance does more than just pay for medical care. It can also pay for many services to help you live in the community. You might stay on your parent or guardian's insurance until you turn 26 or you might need your own health insurance when you turn 18. It depends on the type of health insurance you and your family have.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 1-800-292-4150.



Am I eligible for low-cost or free health insurance?

Minnesota has a few different health care plans. They are known as Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP). Information about some of the programs are listed below.

➤ **Medical Assistance (MA)**

Medical Assistance (MA) is Minnesota's Medicaid health insurance program. It pays for many health services, medical equipment and also social services. MA provides health insurance for people with disabilities and people with low incomes. MA has a Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Service that may pay for your trips to and from medical appointments. You may qualify for MA even if you have other health insurance, including Medicare.

Eligibility:

- You are eligible if you are a Minnesota resident and either have a certified disability documented by the Social Security Administration or the State Medical Review Team, or your income is low enough to meet the guidelines.
- You may have to meet family income and asset limits and be a U.S. citizen or a qualifying noncitizen.
- The rules can be different depending on your age. Changes sometimes happen when you turn 19 or 21 years old.

Contact: Apply online through MNsure or contact your local county or tribal human services office.

Find out more at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/>.

➤ **Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD)**

MA-EPD provides MA for people with disabilities who work.

Eligibility:

- You must have a job earning over \$65 per month and have a disability as defined by the Social Security Administration or the State Medical Review Team.
- You can't have resources over the asset limit.

Contact: Your county or tribal human services office.

Find out more at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/> or by contacting the Work Incentives Connection at Goodwill-Easter Seals at 1-800-976-6728 or <https://www.goodwilleasterseals.org/services/work-incentives-connection>.

➤ **MinnesotaCare (MNCare)**

MNCare is a public program that helps pay for health services for people with low to moderate incomes. You might be able to get MNCare if you are not eligible for MA. You may have to pay a low cost monthly premium.

Eligibility:

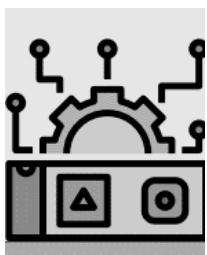
- You are eligible if you are a Minnesota resident and a U.S. citizen or legally in the U.S.
- You must meet family income limits.
- You must meet certain other requirements.

Contact: Apply online through MNsure (www.mnsure.org) or contact your local county or tribal human services office.

Find out more at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/>.

How can I get technology to help me with my disability?

You may be eligible to get assistive technology through:



- Your waiver (see pages 3-4, 13)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services or State Services for the Blind (see page 17)
- The System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) Service (see page 6)

Supports for Everyday Life

There are many supports that can help you live, work and access the community however you choose. You may get some of those supports now, either through your county or through your school. Some of the services you get now in school are provided differently when you graduate.

Getting these supports once you are out of school can be confusing and it can be hard to know where to start. Your school should do a transition planning assessment as part of your IEP transition planning (see page 16). This assessment helps you understand what supports you might benefit from as you move into adulthood.

People of any age with disabilities who need long-term services and supports should ask for a MnCHOICES assessment. This is Minnesota's tool for figuring out what type of supports you might be eligible for, including public programs that might pay for those services. This assessment is free and is done in your home. Contact your county or tribal organization for more information.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 1-800-292-4150.

What if I want to stay in my own home but need extra support?

- **Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs**
Waiver programs offer services and supports for people with disabilities or chronic illness to be able to live in their home. These waivers may be able to cover things like day programs, help with chores, family training and counseling, home modifications, meal delivery services, respite care, transportation, specialist services, and other supports. These waivers can also help you set up independent living arrangements.

If you have a disability and a chronic illness (including a mental health disability), the following types of waivers can help you stay in your home, the home of a relative, or a foster care home:

- **Community Alternative Care Waiver (CAC)**
- **Community Access for Disability Inclusion Waiver (CADI)**
- **Developmental Disabilities Waiver (DD)**
- **Brain Injury Waiver (BI)**



Eligibility: Every waiver program has different requirements specific to the type of disability or illness, but all of them require you to be eligible for Medical Assistance (Minnesota's Medicaid program). Not everyone who gets Medical Assistance is eligible for waiver services. You may have to have a review by the State Medical Review Team (SMRT) to certify your disability or be certified by the Social Security Administration.

Contact: Contact your local county or tribal human services office and ask for a MnCHOICES assessment.

➤ **Personal Care Assistant (PCA)**

PCAs can help with everyday activities like getting dressed, eating, shopping or taking part in community activities.

Eligibility: You must be on Medical Assistance (Medicaid), MinnesotaCare, Alternative Care Program, or a waiver program.



You must:

- Be able to make your own decisions about your care or have a person who can make care decisions for you
- Live in a home or apartment
- Have an assessment completed to decide if you need help with daily living activities

Contact: Your local county or tribal human services office for a MnCHOICES assessment from.

What if I want to have control over who is caring for me?

➤ **Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS)**

CDCS lets you have control over your Medical Assistance (Medicaid) waiver program budget allowance. It may pay for things not covered under other waiver plans, like specialized meals and adaptive services. You can hire, train and manage your care staff. You need to complete a community support plan for the county's approval.

You may be able to get a person who is a support planner to help write the plan. The cost of support planners is often covered by your waiver program.

Parents of minors who are eligible for CDCS can decide to be a 'paid parent of a minor' so they can be the personal care assistant (PCA) for their child.

Eligibility: If you qualify for Medical Assistance and are getting waiver program help, you may be eligible for CDCS services.

Contact: Contact your local county or tribal human services office. If you are already on a waiver, contact your case manager.

➤ **Consumer Support Grant (CSG)**

The CSG is an alternative to Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Home Care Services that lets you choose your care staff, decide what to pay them, and pay for home and other community services.

Eligibility: You must be eligible for Medical Assistance and eligible to get home care services from the Medical Assistance Home Care Program.

You can't be getting services from the Medical Assistance waiver program, PCA or Medical Assistance Home Care Services to get this grant. This grant is not available in all counties.

Contact: Contact your local county or tribal human services office.

What if I need extra services to avoid an out-of-home placement?

➤ **Family Support Grant (FSG)**

FSGs are state cash grants for families of children with certified disabilities. The goal is to prevent or delay out-of-home placement.

Eligibility: This grant is given to:

- Children living in a residential facility who would return home if a grant was awarded or
- Families of children under age 21 with a certified disability living at home

Children who get services from the Medical Assistance waiver program, Consumer Support Grants (CSG) or Personal Care Assistance (PCA) can't get FSG at the same time.

Contact: Contact your local county or tribal human services office.



➤ **Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth Program (STAY)**

The STAY program funds services that help older adolescents in out-of-home placements to get ready for transitioning to independent living.

The services might be things like:

- Life skills training
- Mentorship
- Driver's training
- Career exploration
- Help with damage deposits and household supplies

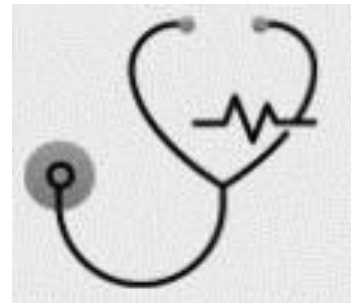
Eligibility: You need to be a youth age 14-23 and in foster care now, or you were in foster care for at least 30 days in a row after age 14 and you are still working with a county or tribal social worker.

Contact: Services vary by county. Contact your local county or tribal human services office.

What if I need special technology to help me at home or in the community?

➤ **Medical Assistance Home and Community-Based Waivers** (see pages 3-4)

➤ **A System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR)**
STAR lends assistive technology equipment to Minnesotans with disabilities.



Eligibility: This program is for Minnesota residents of all ages and disabilities. Family members and guardians of people with disabilities may be eligible too.

Contact: Call the Minnesota Department of Administration STAR Program at 651-201-2640 or toll free at 1-888-234-1267.

➤ **Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED)**

Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) offers a telephone equipment loan program for people with disabilities who need adaptive technology to use the telephone.

Eligibility: You are eligible if you need adaptive technology to use the telephone because you have a hearing, visual, speech or other physical disability. You must have a telephone or have applied for telephone services and meet the program's income guidelines.

Complete an application and submit it with proof showing a certification of disability, household income, Minnesota residency and telephone service.

Contact: Find an application at <https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/communication-access/ted/>.

Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services for more information.

➤ **Simon Technology Center Lending Library at PACER**

PACER's Simon Technology Center Lending Library helps you figure out what assistive technology you may need. You can also borrow assistive technology to make sure it is the right fit for you before you buy it.

Eligibility: Contact PACER for eligibility requirements.

Contact: PACER at 952-838-9000 or <https://www.pacer.org/stc/library/>.



Mental Health

As an adult, you have the right to make decisions about your treatment, except in some limited situations. You can seek services to help you with your mental health and in making choices about where to live, work and gain access to the community.

Note: There may be additional services available to you if you are under the age of 18. For children's mental health services, contact your county or tribal office, or visit <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/childrens-mental-health/>

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 1-800-292-4150 (toll-free).

What services can help me manage my mental health?

There are mental health services all over the state. They include one-on-one therapy, mental health targeted case management, adult rehabilitation mental health services (ARMHS), day treatment, residential crisis programs and hospitals.

How do I find someone to talk to one-on-one?

Talk to your primary medical provider about a therapist or counselor. Your insurance program and community groups may also have recommendations.



Who can help me learn skills to live independently in my community?

➤ **Mental Health Targeted Case Management**

Targeted Case Management is a service to help adults with serious mental health diagnoses connect to other supportive services.

Contact: Contact your local county or tribal human services office.

➤ **Independent Living Skills through Medical Assistance Waiver** (see pages 3-4)

➤ **Adult Rehabilitation Mental Health Services (ARMHS)**

ARMHS staff can help you with the skills you need to live in the community. They can also help you learn about medication. They can also help you interact with an agency, employer, landlord or family member to help you live more independently.



Eligibility: You must be 18 or older, have a serious mental health condition, have a significant impairment in functioning, and be eligible for Medical Assistance (Medicaid). You must have a recent assessment that says you need ARMHS services.

Contact: Contact an ARMHS provider. For a list of providers, call the Minnesota Health Care Programs Member Call Center (651-431-2670) or find a list of providers at <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/adult-mental-health/adult-rehabilitative-mental-health-services/armhs-certified-providers/>

➤ **Certified Peer Specialist Services**

Certified Peer Specialist are people with mental illness who provide mental health services to other people with disabilities. Certified Peer Specialists use their experience to help you set goals, navigate your treatment, and live and work in the community.

Eligibility: You must be 18 years old or older and get either Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Adult Rehabilitation Mental Health Services (ARMHS), Crisis or Intensive Residential Treatment services.

Contact: Your mental health care provider, your county case manager, ARMHS worker or ACT Team.



➤ **Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams**

ACT teams can help you manage your mental health condition and live independently in the community. ACT teams usually include mental health treatment providers, a Certified Peer Specialist, supported employment specialists, and other professionals to help you with independent living, housing, medical care, employment, education and other areas. There are also Intensive Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (IRMHS) teams (formerly known as Youth ACT) for people ages 8-26.

Eligibility for Adult ACT Teams: You must:

- Be 18 or older
- Have a qualifying mental health condition that affects you in several ways
- Be at risk of a mental health crisis OR need more mental health services than a community-based provider can give you

Eligibility for Youth ACT/Intensive Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (IRMHS)

Teams: You must:

- Be 8-26 years old
- Have a serious mental illness or a co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse addiction
- Meet other requirements

Youth ACT Teams are only available in some counties.

Contact: Contact your local county, tribal human services office, mental health provider or an ACT team directly.

Find an Adult ACT team at:

<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/adult-mental->

health/assertive-community-treatment/act-teams.jsp

➤ **Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention (EIDBI)**

Intensive services for people with autism or a related condition who are under 21 and their families.

Eligibility: You must be younger than 21 years old, have an autism spectrum diagnosis or related condition, go through an evaluation that shows you need EIDBI services, and be enrolled in an eligible health care program.

Contact: Your county case manager, your school or an EIDBI service provider. Find a list of providers at www.minnesotahelp.info.



What services can help me find or keep a job?

- **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** (see page 21)

What if I'm having a crisis?

➤ **Crisis Response Services**

Crisis Response Services are available to help you when you are in a mental health crisis. The Crisis Response Service can come to your home or another place to help you. They can help you find immediate services to help you stabilize your situation. They can also help you find mental health service providers close to you.

Contact: Call **274747 from a cell phone or text "MN" to 741741.

Find the phone number in your county to call from a landline by visiting: <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/health-care/mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp>.

If you are under 21, visit: <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/health-care/mental-health/resources/crisis-contacts.jsp>.

What if I'm having psychosis for the first time?

➤ **First Episode Psychosis Programs**

First Episode Psychosis programs help you if you are age 15-40 and are having early signs of psychosis. Psychosis means some loss of contact with reality. Early treatment can help.

Contact: Learn more at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/health-care/mental-health/programs-services/first-episode-psychosis.jsp>



Can a hospital hold me against my wishes because of my mental health condition?

Emergency holds are used by a peace officer (like a police officer or sheriff) or a health officer when they have good reason to believe you have a mental health condition and are going to harm yourself or others. A peace officer may bring you to a hospital and the hospital decides if they think you are going to harm yourself or others. If they think you are going to harm yourself or others, the hospital can hold you against your wishes for up to 72 hours. They also can give you medication if you are unwilling to get treatment. Weekends and holidays are not counted in 72 hours.

Contact: For help, contact the patient advocate at the hospital or facility.

Learn more at the Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities: <https://mn.gov/omhdd/> or National Alliance on Mental Illness Minnesota (NAMI): 1-888-626-4435 or namimn.org.

What if I want someone else to make decisions about my medical care if I'm not able to?

See pages 29-31. (Alternatives to Guardianship)

Where do I find out more if I'm worried about civil commitment?

You have rights during the civil commitment process. Talk to your civil commitment lawyer if one has been assigned to you. If a lawyer has not been assigned to you, contact your county's Commitment Office or the Probate Court to ask how to get a lawyer assigned to you.

Here are more resources with information about civil commitment:

- Minnesota Judicial System: <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Civil-Commitments.aspx>. (Also includes information about expunging your civil commitment)
- Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities: 1-800-657-3506 or <https://mn.gov/omhdd/commitment/>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Minnesota (NAMI) 1-888-626-4435 or <https://namimn.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2022/07/NAMI-CivilCommitmentApril2022-FINAL.pdf>

Housing Options and Supports



As you become an adult, you have decisions to make about where you live. You have the right to live in the least restrictive, most integrated setting that fits your needs. You have the right to make an informed decision about where you live and who you live with. For a guide to Individualized Housing Options (IHO), see PACER's IHO Resource Guide for Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.pacer.org/housing/gettingstarted/images/IHO-Resource-Guide.pdf>

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150 (toll-free).

How can I live on my own?

➤ **Individualized Home Supports with Training (also known as Independent Living Skills (ILS))**

Independent Living Skills are the skills that help you meet your daily basic needs as an adult. If you have a disability, you may need help learning these skills you need to live on your own. This could be things like cooking, getting ready for a driver's permit written test, finding and keeping roommates, finding affordable housing, making art for fun or relaxation, or going to meet-ups to make new friends.

Eligibility: You must be getting services from a Medical Assistance BI, CAC or CADI waiver program.

Contact: Contact your local Center for Independent Living (CIL). A list of the programs is available at macil.org.

In the Twin Cities, contact the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living at 651-603-2018 or <https://mcil-mn.org/services/independent-living-and-vocational-rehabilitation-services-il-vr/>

I have a waiver. Can I use my waiver to help me live on my own?

If you are getting services from a Medical Assistance waiver program, there are many different services you may be eligible for that help you live on your own. Some services include home-delivered meals, home maker or chore services, technology and transportation. Below are some other examples. Talk with your case manager for your waiver to find out what may be available to you.

➤ Individualized Home Supports

Services that provide support or training in community living for people who live in their own home or their family's home.

Contact: Call your county or tribal case manager for your waiver.

➤ Personal Care Assistant (PCA)

See page 4.

➤ Live-in Caregiver

Depending on your needs, waiver services can be used to pay for services for a caregiver who lives with you. You should talk with your case manager to determine what services you are eligible for.

Contact: Call your county or tribal case manager for your waiver.



What if I need help finding housing?

➤ Housing Benefits 101 (HB101)

If you want any change in your housing situation, Housing Benefits 101 is a great place to start. Their website breaks down how different government assistance affects your options and gives advice based on different living situations.

Contact: Visit their website: <https://mn.hb101.org/>

➤ **Housing Stabilization Services**

Eligibility: You may be able to get help finding housing through a program called Housing Stabilization Services. You need to be 18 years old or older, be on Medical Assistance (MA), have a disability, and have a waiver or not have stable housing.

Contact: Call the Arc Minnesota at 952-915-3632 or visit: <https://arcminnesota.org/ways-we-can-help/housing-stabilization-services/>

➤ **Housing Link**

If you are looking for help finding housing, there are resources that can help you find lists of places to call. You can filter for your different needs based on accessibility, income and government assistance.

Contact: Visit their website: <https://www.housinglink.org/>

➤ **Roommate Match Services**

A service that helps find housing if needed and helps match you with a caregiver you get along with.

Contact: Call your county or tribal case manager or visit <https://mn.hb101.org/a/4/>



What if I don't have the skills to live on my own?

➤ **Child or Adult Foster Care**

Adult or child foster care can be in someone's home that is licensed as a Family Foster Care site, a Community Residential Setting, or Corporate Foster Care.

Eligibility: You may be eligible for child or adult foster care depending on your age if you are getting services from a Medical Assistance BI, CAC, CADI or EW waiver program.

Contact: Talk with your county or tribal case manager for your waiver.

What if I can't afford the housing I want?

There are a lot of options to find and pay for affordable housing. Visit <https://mn.hb101.org>.

➤ **Housing Support Program**

Eligibility: If you can't afford an apartment or group housing, you may be eligible for the Housing Support program (formerly known as Group Residential Housing). Housing Support helps pay for room, board and possibly PCA services if you are not on a Medical Assistance waiver program.

Contact: Call your local county or tribal office or apply online at: <https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/>

Education

Most of your transition planning happens through your high school and your individualized education plan (IEP). If you have a disability but don't already have an IEP, reach out to your school's special education director. You have the right to an IEP that includes goals based on your current level of performance and a description of services and



accommodations that they can give you to meet those goals. These services must be provided in the least restrictive environment possible to meet your needs.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150 (toll-free).

How can my school help me get ready to transition into adulthood?

➤ **Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Planning**

When you are in ninth grade, your IEP team should start thinking about how to help you prepare for your life when you transition from, or leave, high school. Your IEP includes sections on how to prepare for postsecondary education and training, employment,

recreation, community participation and home living. Your input is especially important during these years and your participation in the IEP meetings is very important.

Eligibility: If you are a student age 14 or older, you are eligible for transition services in your IEP.

If you are a student age 18 or older and you are your own guardian, you can make decisions about your IEP on your own.

Contact: Your local school district, IEP case manager or IEP team.

➤ **School District's Transition Program**

If you and your IEP team agree that you need special education services past your senior high school year, you can take part in a specialized transition program. Specialized transition programs let you develop job skills, find a job, and have a work-based learning experience. The program can also help with independent living skills, money management, exploring the community, getting ready for college, navigating social situations and practicing other skills.

Eligibility: You and your IEP team determine eligibility. Usually, you are eligible if you are a student with a disability aged 18-21 with additional special education needs after high school.

Note: You are not eligible for a transition program if you got your high school diploma. Many districts let you “walk through” the graduation ceremony and then attend the transition program.

When you complete the transition program anytime between ages 18 and 21, you get your high school diploma. You and your IEP team figure out when you can graduate from the transition program. If you are a student age 18 or older and you are your own guardian, you can make decisions about your IEPs on your own.



Contact: Your local school district, IEP case manager or IEP team.

➤ **Section 504 Plan**

A Section 504 plan recognizes a student's disabilities and ensures the student's access to school programs and services. This includes vocational, training or extracurricular options in high school. The plan uses reasonable accommodations to let you have full access to and participation in school-run activities and the general curriculum.

Eligibility: You need to be a student who has a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities as defined by law.

Contact: Your school or special education department.

Are there other resources to help me explore my options after graduation?

➤ **Vocational Rehabilitation**

There are two state vocational rehabilitation agencies that help youth and adults plan for work, career training and college:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) helps people with most disabilities.
- State Services for the Blind (SSB) helps people who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.

VRS and SSB counselors can help you think about your interests and strengths, and then plan how to gain work experience and skills.

VRS and SSB also provide Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities who may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, even if the student has not applied for services.

If you have a Medical Assistance waiver, you may get some services from Vocational Rehabilitation and some through your waiver. (See pages 3-4.)

Eligibility: If you are a student with a documented disability, you may be eligible for these services.

If you are no longer a student, you can still apply for vocational rehabilitation services by contacting your local VRS or SSB office. You probably qualify for free vocational rehabilitation services if you get money from the government because of your disability (like SSI or SSDI).



If you don't get SSI or SSDI, your eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services depends on if your disability makes it really hard to get or keep a job on your own.

Contact: Every Minnesota high school has an assigned VRS counselor for students with disabilities. Contact your school's designated VRS counselor.

Find out more at <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/>. Contact State Services for the Blind at 651-539-2300 or www.mnssb.org.

Will I get any accommodations if I go to college?

➤ **Postsecondary Accommodations**

Your postsecondary school does not have to give you as much help as your high school. Colleges and Career and Technical education programs only have to provide the academic changes necessary to make sure that they don't discriminate against you because of your disability.

Examples of accommodations colleges may be required to provide include testing accommodations, academic and classroom accommodations, campus navigation, and accessibility modifications.

If your postsecondary school has housing for nondisabled students, they have to offer similar and accessible housing to students with disabilities at the same cost.



Eligibility: You may be eligible for accommodations if you have a documented disability. Make sure you can show proof of your disability. Proof may be things like:

- An IEP
- A 504 Plan
- A vocational assessment
- A mobility assessment
- A statement from a qualified health professional

Your school's website may have more information on accommodations they offer and what you need to prove your disability.

Contact: You have the responsibility in postsecondary education to ask for your own accommodations. Colleges usually won't be proactive about providing them.

Most postsecondary schools have an office to help you with accessibility, accommodations and assistive technology on campus. These offices are often called "disability services," and work with you to help meet your needs so you can access your school or training program.

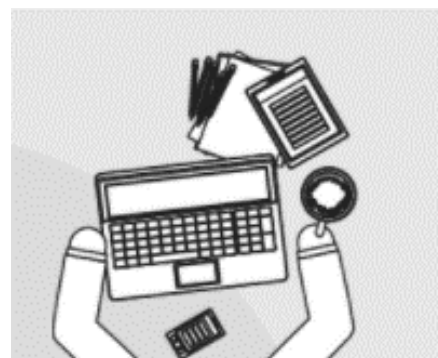
Working

Having a job or career is an important part of adult life. For many adults, work helps them learn important skills and pay for what they need. Work also gives you a chance to build relationships with others in the community. As you think about your work options, it's important to know what services are available to help you overcome any barriers.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150 (toll-free).

What are my job options?

- You have a right to work in your community alongside people with and without disabilities and earn at least minimum wage. Some people call this “competitive integrated employment.”
- You might choose to work only with people with disabilities. If you do, you may earn less than minimum wage. (See page 22.) If you choose to earn less than minimum wage, you can change your mind at any time and ask for support to work in the community earning minimum wage or more.
- Talk to your case manager or your Vocational Rehabilitation counselor for more information about how to get the services you need to work in the community earning minimum wage or more.



Who do I talk to for help with getting or keeping a job?

➤ Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

You may be able to get career counseling, job training, and help finding a job. These services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Services for the Blind. (See page 17.)

If you have a Medical Assistance waiver, you may get some services from Vocational Rehabilitation and some through your waiver.

➤ Medical Assistance Waiver Employment Services

There are a few different services to help you think about working and find a job if you are getting services from a Medical Assistance waiver program.

- **Employment Exploration Services:** You can learn about different work options and figure out what type of job would be best for you based on your interests and strengths. You can visit workplaces, meet with workers who are already doing the type of work you are interested in, or try out a job for a short time to see how you like it.
- **Employment Discovery Services:** You can get help figuring out your job goals and getting ready for a job search, including creating a resume.
- **Employment Supports Services:** You can get help keeping your job, including figuring out problems on the job or adjusting to job changes.
- **Prevocational Services:** You can get help with the general skills you need to get and keep a job, like communication, regular attendance and transportation.

If you have a Medical Assistance waiver, you may get some services from Vocational Rehabilitation and some through your waiver.

Eligibility: You must be eligible for the DD, CAC, CADI or BI Medical Assistance waiver program. (See pages 3-4.)

Contact: Your waiver case manager. Learn more at Disability Hub MN's Waiver Employment Services FAQ:

<https://disabilityhubmn.org/toptopics/independence/waivers/>

➤ **Extended Employment**

You may be able to get services to help you keep your job or move forward in your career.

Eligibility: You must have a significant disability or other employment barrier. You must need long-term help to keep your job or advance in your career.

Contact: Your waiver case manager or your vocational rehabilitation counselor. You can also contact an Extended Employment provider directly.



Find a list of providers and more information at <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/extend-employment/>

➤ **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)**

The IPS program helps people with serious mental illness who want to work in the community.

Eligibility: You must have a serious mental illness and be referred by a mental health provider.

Contact: Your mental health provider. Learn more about IPS at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/health-care/adult-mental-health/programs-services/ips.jsp>

➤ **CareerForce Centers**

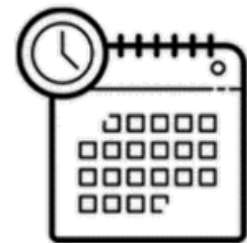
CareerForce staff and offices help people find jobs, write resumes, practice their interviewing skills, and provide other job searching help. Their services are free.

Contact: Your local CareerForce office. Find it at www.careerforcemn.com or call 651-259-7501.

What if I can do my job but need small changes to my schedule or tasks because of my disability?

➤ **Reasonable Accommodations**

If you work somewhere with 15 or more other people, your employer must make changes you need because of your mental or physical disability. These changes are called reasonable accommodations. But the changes can't be an undue hardship for your employer. Undue hardship means it would be a change that is too hard or too expensive.



Read more about your rights at:

- Job Accommodations Network: <https://askjan.org/>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): www.eeoc.gov
- Minnesota Department of Human Rights: <https://mn.gov/mdhr/yourrights/who-is-protected/disability/reasonable-accommodation.jsp>

Contact: The Job Accommodations Network (JAN) gives information and advice about reasonable accommodations to workers and employers. Contact JAN at 800-526-7234 or askjan.org.

If you need legal help and get Social Security disability benefits, call the Minnesota Disability Law Center at 1-800-292-4150 or go to www.mndlc.org. Otherwise, call a private lawyer.

Can an employer pay me less than minimum wage?

Some employers can get special permission from the government to pay workers with disabilities less than minimum wage. This is called a subminimum wage. An employer can only pay a subminimum wage if you have a disability that affects your job performance for the specific task you are doing. For example, a person whose hand is clenched and has trouble picking up pieces to assemble a part.

Contact: For more information or if you have a complaint, contact the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division at 612-370-3341 or go to <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/workers-with-disabilities/workers>

Or contact the Minnesota Disability Law Center at 1-800-292-4150 or at www.mndlc.org

What if I need a ride to my job?

➤ Public Transportation

This includes public transit for people with disabilities who can't access other public transportation. (See pages 32-33.)

Your local Vocational Rehabilitation Services office or county social services case manager can help you find out what options there are in your community.

These could be things like:

- Getting your own car
- Ride sharing
- Bus
- Light rail
- Other public transportation, and other arrangements (See pages 17, 33.)



If you are on a waiver, you may be eligible for additional transportation services.

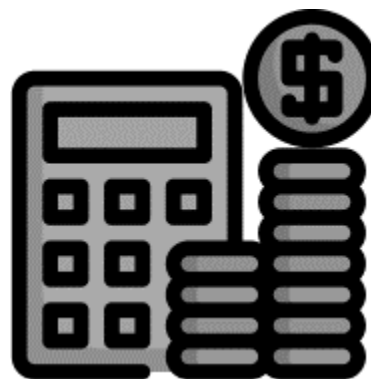
What if I want to be financially independent of the government?

➤ Ticket to Work

If you get money from the government for your disability (SSDI or SSI) and want to make enough money on your own to get off of SSDI or SSI, the Social Security Administration has a program for you: Ticket to Work. (See page 25.)

Money and Financial Help

Knowing how to handle your own money is an important life skill. As an adult, you have the right to manage your own money, unless a judge has decided you can't. If you need help managing your money, there are ways for people to help you without taking away all your control. Also, if you don't have enough money to pay for the things you need, there are programs that may help you.



MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150 (toll-free).

Is there financial help available for me?

➤ **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

The SSI program pays benefits to adults and children with disabilities who have limited incomes and financial resources. You don't have to have a work history to be eligible.

Eligibility: You must either have a disability, be blind or be 65 years or older, and have limited income and resources.

Contact: Call or visit your local Social Security office.

Online applications are available at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/>.

For more information, visit <https://www.lawhelpmn.org/issues/disability/social-security-and-ssi-disability-benefits>.

➤ **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**

SSDI pays benefits to people with disabilities and certain family members. You must have a work history to be eligible for SSDI.

Eligibility: You must have a disability and have worked long enough and paid Social Security taxes.

Contact: Call or visit your local Social Security office.

Online applications are available at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/>.

For more information, visit <https://www.lawhelpmn.org/issues/disability/social-security-and-ssi-disability-benefits>.

➤ **Minnesota General Assistance (GA)**

You can get money if you can't work enough to support yourself or if you have a very low income and not a lot of other resources.



Eligibility: If you can't work enough to support yourself because of your disability or other listed categories. You must also meet income and asset limits.

Contact: Apply online at <https://mnbenefits.mn.gov>.

➤ **Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA)**

You can get cash assistance (in addition to your SSI benefits) to pay for basic needs.

Eligibility: You must be 18 or older and eligible for SSI. You may be eligible even if you are not getting SSI right now. There is an asset limit.

Contact: Apply online at <https://mnbenefits.mn.gov> or contact your county or tribal human services office.

➤ **Minnesota Supplement Aid (MSA) Housing Assistance**

You can get money to help pay for your rent, mortgage payments and utilities.

Eligibility: You must be eligible for MSA and have housing costs that are more than 40 percent of your total income.

You must also be moving to the community from an institution, be eligible for Medical Assistance, or be living in your own home and getting Medical Assistance home and community-based waiver services.

Contact: Apply online at mnbenefits.mn.gov or contact your county or tribal human services office. If you are already getting MSA, contact your county worker.



➤ **Energy Assistance Program (EAP)**

You can get a grant to help pay for your home heating costs.

Eligibility: You must be a renter or homeowner and your income must be at or below 50 percent of the state median income.

Contact: The EAP provider serving your county or tribe. You may also contact the Minnesota Commerce Department: <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>.

➤ **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

You can get help paying for food through SNAP. SNAP used to be known as Food Stamps.

Eligibility: Your eligibility depends on your income.

Contact: Apply online at mnbenefits.mn.gov or contact your county or tribal human services office.



Can I work and get disability benefits?

Yes! The Social Security Administration (SSA) has programs to help you start working or go back to work. These programs are called work incentives.

➤ **Ticket to Work**

Ticket to Work is a free program through SSA that helps people getting disability benefits figure out if they can work. You can get help figuring out if you are able to work, help getting ready for work, and help getting and keeping a job.

Eligibility: You must be getting SSI or SSDI benefits and want to work.

Contact: The Ticket to Work Helpline at 1-866-968-7842 or <https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/how-it-works/index.html>.

➤ **Student Earned Income Exception**

Students can earn a certain amount of money and SSA does not count the income when they figure out your disability benefits. The amount changes each year. Find it in SSA's Red Book: <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>.

Eligibility: You must be getting SSI, be under age 22 and attend school regularly.

Contact: Your local Social Security office. Learn more at <https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>.

➤ **More Social Security Work Incentives**

There are other work incentives to help people getting disability benefits work. Examples include the Earned Income Exception, PASS Plans, and Impairment Related Work Expenses.

Eligibility: You must be getting disability benefits. Each work incentive has its own eligibility requirements.

Contact: Your local Social Security office. Learn more at www.ssa.gov/redbook.

Does working affect the amount of disability benefits I get?

Earning money can affect the government benefits you get, but often not as much as you expect. You can find out how working could affect your benefits by getting help with benefits planning.

Eligibility: Benefits planning or analysis is for people who are getting some type of government benefit and are planning to work or already working.

Contact: The Work Incentives Connection at Goodwill-Easter Seals at 1-800-976-6728 or <https://www.goodwilleasterseals.org/services/disability-services?tab=disabilitybenefitssupport>.

You can also contact Disability HUB MN at 1-866-333-2466 or disabilityhubmn.org.

Do I need to tell the Social Security Administration if I'm working?

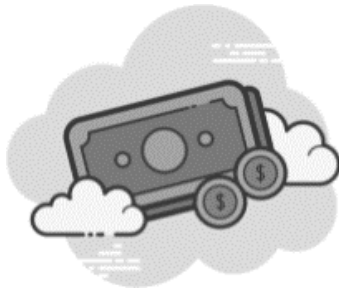
Yes. Be sure to tell SSA when you start or stop work, or when your work duties, hours or pay change. You should also tell SSA if you are paying for expenses that are related to your disability and you need to be able to work.



Eligibility: You must report your earnings to SSA if you are getting SSI or SSDI.

Contact: Your local Social Security office. Learn more at <https://choosework.ssa.gov/library/wage-reporting/>.

How can I save money while getting disability benefits?



➤ **ABLE Accounts**

ABLE accounts are a way for you to save or invest up to \$15,000 per year without going over the resource limit for SSI, Medical Assistance (Medicaid) and other assistance programs. You have complete control over your account. Your family and friends can also deposit into the account.

Eligibility: You must have a disability that started before you were 26 and one of the following:

- Be eligible for SSI or SSDI because of a disability
- Experience blindness as determined by the Social Security Act
- Have another severe disability with a written diagnosis from a licensed physician

Contact: For more information or to apply for an ABLE account, contact the Minnesota ABLE Plan office at 888-609-8872 or go to <https://savewithable.com/mn/home.html>.

How can I be smart about managing my money?

Figuring out how to manage your money and budget can be hard, especially if you have a limited income. There are resources that can help you make smart decisions. You may also want to look into whether a bank or credit union account is right for you, and what information you need to open a bank or credit union account.

Contact: Disability HUB MN at 1-866-333-2466 or <https://disabilityhubmn.org/your-options/money/money-management/>

You can also contact Lutheran Social Services Financial Counseling at 1-888-577-2227 or <https://www.lssmn.org/financialcounseling/>.

Check out the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's website: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/>.

Learn more about opening a bank or credit union account at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/bank-accounts/>.

What if I can't manage my money by myself?

➤ **Representative Payee Services**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) can appoint a Representative Payee if you ask for one or if SSA finds that you need help in managing your benefit payments. In many cases, SSA tries to appoint a family member or close friend. If that is not possible, SSA appoints a social service agency or other organization as your Representative Payee.



Eligibility: You must be getting Social Security benefits and need help managing your money.

Contact: Your local Social Security office. More information available at: <https://www.ssa.gov/payee/index.htm>

➤ **Conservatorship**

If you can't make financial decisions for yourself, a court can appoint a conservator to make financial decisions for you. The conservator must submit an annual reporting to the court.



Eligibility: Someone must file a petition with a court. There is a court hearing and a judge decides if you need a conservator to help you manage your money.

Contact: The Minnesota Judicial Branch provides information on conservatorship at <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Conservatorship.aspx>.

You may want to speak with a lawyer.

You should also contact your county or tribal human services office because they may help pay for legal costs.

Alternatives to Guardianship

Many young adults with disabilities are able to manage their lives without guardians. A guardian is appointed by a judge to make decisions for someone. The guardian has the legal authority to make decisions for you about where you live, work and what type of medical care you get. There are ways to get help managing things without giving up your ability to make decisions for yourself. **You have rights.** You deserve to make as many decisions as you can without restrictions based on your disability.

How can I get help managing my life without having a guardian?

➤ **Supported Decision Making**

Supported decision making is a process that lets you and other people in your life think about how you can get the help you need to make decisions without a court-ordered guardian. You can figure out through the decision-making process if a health care directive, power of attorney or other arrangement is right for you.

Contact: WINGS at 844-333-1748 or <http://wingsmn.org/supported-decision-making>.

What if I need help managing my money?

➤ **Representative Payee Services (see page 28.)**



What if I want to plan ahead about who will make medical or financial decisions for me if I am unable to in the future?

➤ **Health Care Directives**

A Health Care Directive is sometimes known as a “living will.” It helps people know what to do if you lose your ability to make decisions on your own. The Directive gives health care instructions to providers, family members and anyone else that you want to give instructions to about your health and well-being.

Eligibility: Anyone can create a Health Care Directive.

Contact: Estate & Elder Law Services at 612-676-6300 or visit their website at: <https://www.voamnwi.org/estate-and-elder-law>.

➤ **Living Trust**

A Living Trust is a document you can do instead of a will that says what happens to your belongings and property when you die. A Living Trust also says how your belongings and property should be handled during your lifetime if you lose the ability to make decisions on your own. It is also known as a revocable trust.



Eligibility: Anyone can create a Living Trust.

Contact: Estate & Elder Law Services at 612-676-6300 or visit their website at: <https://www.voamnwi.org/estate-and-elder-law>.

➤ **Joint Bank Accounts**

You can set up a bank account so that someone you trust can access the money in it for your benefit if you are having a hard time managing your finances.

CAUTION: A joint bank account is the property of both of the people whose names are on the account. Both people can withdraw money. Make sure you set up the joint bank account with someone you truly trust. A safer option is to have your own bank account and give someone you trust power of attorney to access the money in the account for you.

Eligibility: Anyone can set up a joint bank account if they have capacity.

Contact: Your bank and ask about setting up a joint bank account along with power of attorney.

➤ **Durable Powers of Attorney**

You can choose a competent adult to be your attorney-in-fact in writing. The Power of Attorney gives that adult the power to make decisions about your finances if you lose the ability to make decisions on your own. It also keeps the court from appointing a guardian.

Eligibility: Anyone can designate a Power of Attorney.

Contact: Call Estate & Elder Law Services at 612-676-6300 or visit their website at: <https://www.voamnwi.org/estate-and-elder-law>.

➤ **Protective Arrangements**

If a court decides there is a reason to appoint a guardian or conservator for you, there is an alternative called a Protective Arrangement. Instead of appointing a guardian or conservator, the court could decide to be in charge. They can authorize, direct or approve any transaction you need for your security, service or care arrangements.

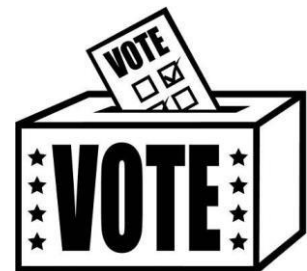
Eligibility: Determined by the court.

Contact: Estate & Elder Law Services at 612-676-6300 or visit their website at: <https://www.voamnwi.org/estate-and-elder-law>.

Voting

Representation matters. You have the right to vote and be a part of elections when you turn 18. Your polling place must be accessible.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble voting because of your disability. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150.



How do I register to vote?

You can register online on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website or by filling out a form. The form can be mailed or dropped off at the Secretary of State's office or your county election office.

Minnesota lets voters register the day of the election. You can register at your polling location or an early voting location.

Eligibility: You must be a United States citizen, at least 18 years old on Election Day and a resident of Minnesota for at least 20 days.

Contact: Register to vote on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/>.

If you need help or have questions, contact your county election office. A list of county election offices can also be found on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website.

Can I vote if I have a guardian?

You are eligible to vote even if you have a guardian, unless a court has specifically ordered that you can't vote.

Will I be able to vote?

- You have the right to access your local polling place or to cast an absentee ballot.
- You have the right to cast a ballot in secret.
- You have the right to ask for help with marking and casting your ballot, but you must be able to communicate who or what you want to vote for. Someone helping you mark or cast your ballot can't try to influence your voting choices in any way.

Eligibility: Check your voter registration status at <https://mnvotes.sos.mn.gov/voterstatuscheck/index>

Contact: Contact the Minnesota Secretary of State's office: 1-877-600-8683 or www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/ or the Minnesota Disability Law Center: 1-800-292-4150 or www.mndlc.org if your voting rights have been violated.

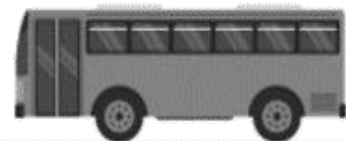
Transportation

Getting to and from your job, medical provider, errands and friends is an important part of being a part of the community. There are a range of options to help.

MDLC may be able to help if you are having trouble accessing the programs listed or if you are denied services. If you need help, call MDLC and CAP at 612-334-5970 or 800-292-4150 (toll-free).

What if I can't figure out the bus or light rail system?

- **In the Twin Cities: Metro Transit and Metro Mobility**
If you are having a hard time figuring out how to ride the bus or light rail, there are trip tools, schedules and maps on Metro Transit's webpage: www.metrotransit.org



Eligibility: If your disability keeps you from using regular routes, you may be eligible for Metro Mobility.

Contact: Call Metro Mobility at 651-602-1111, TTY 651-221-9886 or visit:
<https://metro council.org/transportation/services/Metro-Mobility-Home.aspx>

- **In Greater Minnesota:** Contact the public transportation system in your area to ask about transit for people with disabilities.

What are other options besides public transportation?

- **Ride-Sharing Services**

You can pay for someone to drive you in their car. Some ride-sharing services have accessible options and there are ride-sharing services designed for people with disabilities.

Learn more: <https://arcminnesota.org/resource/transportation-resources/>

- **Taxis**

You can pay someone to drive you in a taxi. Some taxi companies have accessible vehicles.

Learn more:

<https://arcminnesota.org/resource/transportation-resources/>



- **Carpools**

You may be able to get a ride with friends, coworkers or others you know. Carpooling can help everyone in the car because carpools may get a parking discount and may be able to use MN Pass lanes for free.

Learn more: <https://www.metrotransit.org/carpool>

What services help pay for transportation?

- **Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs**
(see pages 3-4.)

Your waiver can help you with transportation. For example, an independent living skills (ILS) staff member can help you learn how to take public transportation or get your

driver's permit. In some situations, your waiver may also cover transportation to and from a job site.

➤ **Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS)** (See page 4.)

The CDCS program gives you the flexibility to spend your waiver budget on transportation that best meets your needs. You may be able to use your waiver budget to get help with transportation to do shopping for essential items or to take part in community activities.

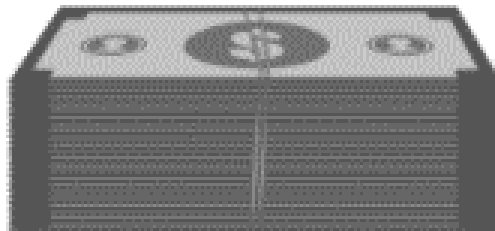
➤ **Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Service**

If you get Medical Assistance (MA), it could pay for your transportation to and from medical appointments.

Contact: Disability Hub MN at 1-866-333-2466 or visit: <https://disabilityhubmn.org>

➤ **Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Your local Vocational Rehabilitation Services Office can help you find options for getting around in your community. This could include getting your own car, ride-sharing possibilities, traveling by bus or light rail or making other public transportation arrangements. (See page 17.)



Resources

Social Service Contacts by County

<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/health-care/health-care-programs/contact-us/county-tribal-offices.jsp>

General Resources and Advocacy Organizations

Disability Benefits 101

Disability Benefits 101 has lots of additional information about disability services that may be available to you.

mn.db101.org

PACER Center

PACER Center works to enhance the quality of life and expand opportunities for children, youth and young adults with all disabilities and their families.

pacer.org

NAMI MN

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults with mental illnesses and their families.

namimn.org

The Arc Minnesota

The Arc Minnesota provides information and assistance to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families statewide.

arcminnesota.org

MN Brain Injury Alliance

A statewide nonprofit dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with brain injury.

braininjurymn.org

Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM)

The Autism Society of Minnesota provides information and assistance to support people affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.

ausm.org

Centers for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) provide information and referral, training, counseling and advocacy services for individuals with disabilities.

- [Access North](#)
1309 E. 40th St.
Hibbing, MN 55746
(218) 262-6675
- [SEMCIL \(Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living\)](#)
2200 2nd St. SW
Rochester, MN 55902
(507) 285-1815
- [SMILES](#)
709 S. Front St., Suite 7
Mankato, MN 56001
(507) 345-7139
- [SWCIL \(Southwestern Center for Independent Living\)](#)
109 S. 5th St., Suite 700
Marshall, MN 56258
(507) 532-2221
- [MCIL \(Metropolitan Center for Independent Living\)](#)
530 Robert St. N.
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 646-8342
- [Independent Lifestyles](#)
215 N. Benton Dr.
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379
(320) 529-9000
- [Freedom Resource Center](#)
2701 9th Ave. S., Suite H
Fargo, ND 58103
(800) 450-0459
- [Options](#)
318 3rd St. NW
East Grand Forks, MN 56721
(218) 773-6100

Tips For Contacting Organizations for Help

Making phone calls can be stressful. It's especially stressful if you're not sure who you need to talk to about services or benefits you need. Most of the agencies you call start off with recordings that tell you to push different numbers for different options. It's not always clear which option applies to you. These recordings are called "phone trees." Here are some tips on how to get a person on the phone and get better contact with agencies.

- 1. Know your case number, if you have one.** If you already get a service or benefit, have your case number ready when you call.
- 2. Know who your caseworker is.** If you have a caseworker, call them. Their number is often included in notices you get about your services or benefits.
- 3. Know your caseworker's role and responsibilities.** Your caseworker is responsible for coordinating assessments, helping you create a care plan, making referrals to other providers, checking in on how your plan is working, and advocating for you.
- 4. Ask about your case management provider options.** There are a wide range of case management providers statewide. Some of them contract to provide services through the county. Make sure you ask about all your options and weigh the pros and cons of different providers.
- 5. Ask for the operator or service representative when in doubt.** If none of the options make sense when you call, wait for an instruction to press 0, or another number they say, that says you get to speak with a representative.
- 6. If you get a person on the phone, ask for their name, direct number and/or email.** Getting someone's contact information makes it easier to follow up and avoid the phone tree process.
- 7. If you leave a voicemail, follow up.** If you wait for the agency or caseworker to call you back, you may not get a response quickly. Wait a day or two then call again so you do not end up waiting a week or longer.
- 8. Keep copies of your records and notices.** Keep all notices and records that come in the mail. Notices help you understand the timeline and when your rights may come into play if the county, state or federal government makes a mistake. They also help a lawyer figure out if your rights have been violated.