

ATTORNEY TIP SHEET #7

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO GRADUATE WHEN HE TURNS 18?

I. STEP ONE: KNOW THE LAW

Students with IEPs in Ohio can **receive services until they turn 22**. The timing of graduation depends on the child's individual needs. Even if a student has all required credits to graduate, he can continue to receive services if necessary for a FAPE.

Two major reasons for extending graduation are the provision of **transition services**, and the **acquisition of social and self-care skills**.

Tip: When a student turns 22 during the school year, the decision to allow that student to finish out the year is a decision made by the individual school board. Check your school board policy to see if your child has the option to finish out the school year in which he turns 22.

II. STEP TWO: REVIEW THE IEP

The IEP contains information relevant to graduation. Review the IEP to determine:

Has the school provided appropriate transition planning and services? If not, this may be a reason to delay graduation. See, FAQ-Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities, tab 6.

Has your child accumulated all required credits to graduate? If yes, discuss with the IEP team whether your child needs to remain in school to receive other services to prepare him for life or work after high school, such as social and self-care skills.

Has your child met the testing requirements to graduate? Sometimes, students with disabilities are exempted from the consequences of failing to pass state testing requirements. You should determine whether exemption is appropriate for your child and make sure the IEP accurately reflects your position.

III. STEP THREE: DETERMINE YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

The decision to postpone graduation is an individualized decision. It is best to include the student in this decision. Ask for an IEP meeting to discuss this issue. Keep in mind that this decision can change depending on the individual needs of the student as time passes. Also remember that many students wish to graduate with their peers. Good transition planning will help to make graduation a smooth process.

Tip: Some school boards allow **social graduation**. Social graduation allows students with IEPs to participate in the graduation ceremony with their class peers. The student with a disability does not accept a diploma. Rather, he defers the diploma to receive additional services under the IEP.