



# Becoming a teenager

## A resource for parents and supporters

Becoming a teenager is an exciting time in a young person's life. It is a time filled with growth and increasing independence as they step away from childhood and move toward adulthood. This age can also be a time of huge change and administrative challenges for parents and supporters. This resource covers some of the key administrative changes you will need to carry out for your teenager.



# Proof of identity

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## Birth certificate

A birth certificate is an important piece of identification to help apply for government payments, a bank account and a tax file number. If you don't have a birth certificate or have misplaced your teenager's birth certificate, you can find out how to apply for a new one from the official website of the relevant State or Territory.

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/register-birth-your-baby?context=60001>

If you need to get a copy of your child's birth certificate you can apply through official website of the relevant State or Territory Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

### Australian Capital Territory:

 <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/apply-for-a-birth-death-or-marriage-certificate-tab-overview>

### New South Wales:

 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/births-deaths-marriages>

### Northern Territory:

 <https://nt.gov.au/law/bdm>

### Queensland:

 <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/rbdm>

### South Australia:

 <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/births-deaths-and-marriages>

### Tasmania:

 <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm>

### Victoria:

 <https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au>

### Western Australia:


 <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-justice/the-registry-of-births-deaths-and-marriages>



## Australian passport

To apply for a child's Australian passport, you will need a copy of your child's full birth certificate. You will also need evidence that your child is an Australian citizen, along with other supporting documents. A passport is not a compulsory document unless you wish to travel overseas, but it can provide evidence for proof of identity.

In Australia, you can lodge the child's application and pay the passport fee at a participating Australia Post outlet:

 <https://auspost.com.au/id-and-document-services/passports/apply-for-a-new-australian-passport#tab2>

You can find out more on the Australian Passport Office website:

 <https://www.passports.gov.au>

## Tax File Number

A tax file number is not compulsory, but if your teenager doesn't have a tax file number, they will be required to pay a higher rate of tax if they choose to work. They may also need a tax file number to apply for government benefits. More information about tax file numbers and how to apply for one can be found here:

 <https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals/tax-file-number/>

## Other supporting documents

Other documents may be used to help with proof of identity, such as a student ID card, school reports, medical reports like immunisation records, or a letter from a school principal on a letterhead.



# Turning 13

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## Online safety

Going online is a great way to connect with friends and may be necessary for schoolwork, but problems arise when the internet isn't used safely. Having good online literacy is important and is a skill that needs to be taught.

More information about social media and online safety can be found here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/social-media-and-online-safety-guide/>

Down Syndrome Australia has a number of Easy Read resources about online safety for teenagers:

### Using the Internet Safely (Easy Read)

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/using-the-internet-safely-easy-read/>

### Using money online (Easy Read)

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/using-money-online-easy-read/>

### Using the internet to stay in touch (Easy Read)

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/using-the-internet-to-stay-in-touch-easy-read/>

### Top Tips for Staying Safe Online (Easy Read)

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/top-tips-for-staying-safe-online/>

The Be Connected website also has a range of easy guides and online courses to help increase digital skills.

 <https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/>



## Travel card

A travel card is useful if your teenager is using bus, train, ferry or tram services. Having a child, student or concession card will allow your teenager to travel at reduced fares, and can help make travel simpler and easier.

You can find out more or apply on your state or territory Transport website.

## Companion Card

A Companion Card allows eligible people with disability to attend venues and activities without paying for the cost of a second ticket for a companion.

The card is for people with disability who require attendant support to participate in events. It cannot be used for a child who needs attendant care due to their age rather than their disability.

States and territories are responsible for issuing Companion Cards. You can find the links for each state and territory on the Department of Social Services website:

 <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/national-companion-card>



# Turning 14

## My Health Record

When a teenager turns 14 their parents no longer have access to their personal medical details via My Health Record. This can have implications for accessing information such as Immunisation History Statements. More information about this change and how to organise a nominated representative can be found here:

 <https://www.myhealthrecord.gov.au/for-you-your-family/howtos/manage-your-record-from-age-14>

## myGov account

When your young person turns 14, they can have their own myGov account. This account can link to the following government services and can assist in administration of your young persons matters:

- Australian JobSearch
- Australian Taxation Office
- Centrelink
- Child Support
- Department of Health Applications Portal
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- HousingVic Online Services
- Medicare
- My Aged Care
- My Health Record
- National Cancer Screening Register
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- National Redress Scheme
- State Revenue Office Victoria.

More information about myGov accounts can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/about-mygov>



## Bank accounts

Your teenager will require a bank account to receive government payments or wages. This process can sometimes prove tricky.

Down Syndrome Australia has a useful guide to decision making and guardianship that touches on the topic of bank accounts:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/decision-making-guardianship-and-people-with-down-syndrome/>

Some banks will tell families they need to have formal guardianship to open a bank account for their child, for example an account to hold their pension, wages or NDIS funds. This is incorrect. You can open an account with most banks without this requirement, though you will need to provide documentation to prove identity. If your bank insists you need guardianship, it is an internal rule and not based on guardianship laws.

You can go elsewhere, and other families can often recommend a good bank – some will offer a no-fees account similar to accounts for pensioners. Most families organise joint signatories to the account so they can use the account easily and safely.



# Turning 15

## Medicare

Teenagers 15 and older can have their own Medicare card. This can be useful for people who want to access medical services without the assistance of a parent or carer. The process for obtaining one can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/have-your-own-medicare-card-if-youre-15-or-older-and-enrolled-medicare?context=21796>


## Photo identification card

If a teenager does not have a driver's license or passport, there are other options for photo identification from the age of 15. More information about photo identification options can be found for your state or territory.

### Australian Capital Territory:

 <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/proof-of-identity-cards-tab-overview>

### New South Wales:

 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/driving-boating-and-transport/driver-and-rider-licences/proof-of-identity/photo-cards>

### Northern Territory:

 <https://nt.gov.au/driving/mvr-services/apply-for-nt-evidence-of-age-card>

### Queensland:

 <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/licensing/proof-of-age>

### South Australia:

 <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/driving-and-transport/licences/proof-of-age-card>

### Tasmania:

 <https://www.service.tas.gov.au/services/me-and-my-identity/personal-information-card/apply-for-renew-or-replace-a-personal-information-card>

### Victoria:

 <https://service.vic.gov.au/find-services/personal/apply-for-a-proof-of-age-card#tab-tab-Tab1>

### Western Australia:

 <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/wa-photo-card.asp>





Australia Post offers an **Australia Post Key Pass** which can be used across all states and territories in Australia. You can use this card as proof of your age and identity. Find out more about the Australia Post Key Pass online or at your nearest Australia Post Office:

- More about the Key Pass

 <https://auspost.com.au/id-and-document-services/apply-for-a-keypass-id>

- Find your nearest Post Office

 <https://auspost.com.au/locate/>



# Turning 16

## Disability Support Pension

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) is an income support payment available to people who have a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that restricts their ability to work.

### Eligibility for DSP

DSP is available to people who are aged over 16 years old and who meet the medical and non-medical eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria for the DSP can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/who-can-get-disability-support-pension?context=22276>

To be eligible for DSP your teenager must meet either the manifest medical rules or the general medical rules. Speak to Centrelink before you apply for the DSP to determine what group your teenager belongs in and to see what paperwork you will require to support your claim.

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/manifest-medical-rules-for-disability-support-pension?context=22276#a2>

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/general-medical-rules-for-disability-support-pension?context=22276>

### Claim process

There are steps that you must take to claim DSP, so it is a good idea to start your claim when your teenager turns 15 years and 9 months. They will only be paid the DSP when they turn 16 years old. More information about how to claim DSP can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-disability-support-pension?context=22276>

### Youth Disability Supplement

Young people under the age of 22 who are receiving DSP will be eligible for a Youth Disability Supplement. This will be paid automatically with the DSP. More information about the Youth Disability Supplement can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-disability-supplement>



## Pensioner Education Supplement

If your teenager meets certain study rules and receives an eligible payment from Centrelink, they may be eligible for a Pensioner Education Supplement. More information about the Pensioner Education Supplement can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/who-can-get-pensioner-education-supplement?context=22201>

If your teenager is eligible for the Pensioner Education Supplement, they may also be eligible for the Education Entry Payment. More information about this payment can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/who-can-get-education-entry-payment?context=22146>

## Becoming a nominee

If your teenager requires assistance with managing their DSP, they can choose a person to act as a nominee. This is a good thing to consider when applying for the payment. More information about this process and the different types of Centrelink nominees can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/someone-to-deal-with-us-your-behalf?context=22276>

## Carer Payment/Carer Allowance

If you receive a Carer Payment or Carer Allowance from Centrelink your payments will change when your child turns 16. Centrelink will need to check if you meet the requirements for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance for an adult by conducting a child to adult transfer assessment. This is done when your child is 15 years and 9 months old, and you should be advised of this via your myGov inbox. More information about this transition can be found here:

 <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/transfer-carer-payment-or-carer-allowance-from-child-to-adult?context=21811>

For more information about Centrelink Payments, you can contact the Centrelink Disability, Sickness and Carers line on **13 27 17**.



# Turning 17

## National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides support to Australians living with a permanent and significant disability. Your teenager may already be accessing the NDIS but if not, more information about eligibility for the scheme can be found here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible>

You can also contact the NDIS by calling **1800 800 110**.

### Becoming a nominee

NDIS legislation assumes that individuals have the capacity to manage their own NDIS plans and make their own decisions once they turn 18. This means that the NDIS will no longer allow a parent or carer to enquire about their teenager's NDIS plan once they are 18 years old. If you would like to continue to be a plan nominee for your child, you should get in contact with the NDIS well before they turn 18 to organise this. You can find out more information about the process here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/guardians-and-nominees-explained>

If you would like your child to have full control of their NDIS plan when they turn 18, you have to make sure their contact details and important information are correct prior to their 18th birthday.

### NDIS goals

As your teenager finishes school and becomes an adult, it is important to consider if the goals set out in their NDIS plan are still relevant and whether a review is needed. This can be done at your next scheduled review, or you can request a change of circumstances review. It can be a long process to obtain an unscheduled review, so consider the length of the NDIS plan that you accept as your child enters their teenage years. Ideally you would want to have their scheduled review when they are in Year 11 or 12 so they can consider their post-school goals. More information about this can be found here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/changing-your-plan/change-circumstances>



## School Leaver Employment Supports

School Leaver Employment Supports are available for NDIS participants who are in Year 12 and younger than 22 to support them to meet their employment goals.

The NDIS website states that these supports are designed to:

- help school leaving aged participants explore and understand their work potential
- focus on capacity building, developing skills, independence and confidence to work
- are tailored to the individual and their unique pathway to employment
- are available during the final years of school and directly after leaving school, generally up to two years
- are reviewed periodically to make sure the supports are meeting the participant's goals.

If you think this would be relevant to your child, you should ensure that this is discussed with your NDIS Planner as part of the Plan review. More information about School Leaver Employment Supports can be found here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/finding-keeping-and-changing-jobs/leaving-school>

## Living independently

The road to living independently starts well before your child moves into their own home. It is a good idea to consider what capacity building supports your teenager might need to reach their goal of living independently and discuss these at your next NDIS planning meeting.

Ideas to think about are personal care, daily routines, independent travel, cooking, cleaning and money management. Getting your teenager to work toward independence in as many usual age-appropriate activities as possible is all part of building a strong foundation for living independently later on.

Further information about how the NDIS can support your young person to live independently can be found here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living>



## Disability Employment Supports

Disability Employment Supports (DES) help people with disabilities find and keep work. DES providers are a mixture of large, medium and small for-profit and not-for-profit organisations who are experienced in assisting people with disabilities find employment and who also support employers who have hired a person with a disability to work for them.

You can find more information about DES here:

 <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/disability-employment-services>

### Support from your state or territory Down syndrome association

'Right to Work' supports people with Down syndrome to build their skills to be job ready, and helps connect employers to new job seekers looking for work in open employment.

Visit the Right to Work website here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/right-to-work/>

You can also contact your local Down syndrome association to find out about employment support and employment opportunities they have available.

Call **1300 881 935** or find your state association here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/about-us/our-federation/>



# Turning 18

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## Becoming a nominee

The NDIS will no longer allow a parent or carer to enquire about their teenager's NDIS plan once they are 18 years old. If you haven't already contacted the NDIS yet, then you should contact the NDIS to continue to be a plan nominee for your child. You can find out more information about the process here:

 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/guardians-and-nominees-explained>

If you would like your child to have full control of their NDIS plan when they turn 18, you should make sure their contact details and important information are correct prior to their 18th birthday.

## Guardianship considerations

Not all young people with Down syndrome will need a legal guardian appointed when they turn 18. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (to which Australia is a signatory) states that people with disabilities should have choice and control over their lives, and substitute decision making in the form of guardianship should only be used in very minimal circumstances for a short period of time. There can be unintended consequences of guardianship, so it is important to understand what is involved.

It will depend on your young person's capacity for decision making as to whether guardianship will be required. Supported decision making is an important concept to understand as your young person becomes more independent and capable of making their own decisions.

More information about supported decision making can be found here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/supported-decision-making/>

If you would like to learn more about supported decision making, the La Trobe Support for Decision Making Practice Framework is a comprehensive online training tool that you can access here:

 <https://www.supportfordecisionmakingresource.com.au/>

Inclusion Australia have a range of resources listed on their website:

 [https://www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/resources/?filter\\_topic\\_ids%5B%5D=621](https://www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/resources/?filter_topic_ids%5B%5D=621)





Down Syndrome Australia has developed a resource for people wanting to consider guardianship in more detail. That resource can be found here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/decision-making-guardianship-and-people-with-down-syndrome/>

Your Down syndrome association can help if you have any questions or need support in any of these areas.

Call **1300 881 935** or find your local State/Territory details here:

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/about-us/our-federation/>

You can also visit our website for resources, information and more:

 [www.downsyndrome.org.au](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au)





# Associations

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## National: 1300 881 935

### Australian Capital Territory

#### ACT Down Syndrome Association Inc.

T: (02) 6290 0656

E: [admin@actdsa.org.au](mailto:admin@actdsa.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/act](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/act)

### New South Wales

#### Down Syndrome NSW

T: 1300 881 935

E: [admin@dsansw.org.au](mailto:admin@dsansw.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/nsw](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/nsw)

### Queensland

#### Down Syndrome Queensland

T: (07) 3356 6655

E: [office@downsyndromeqld.org.au](mailto:office@downsyndromeqld.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/qld](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/qld)

### South Australia

#### Information Service South Australia (Down Syndrome Australia)

T: 1300 344 954

E: [infoSA@downsyndrome.org.au](mailto:infoSA@downsyndrome.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/sa](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/sa)

### Tasmania

#### Down Syndrome Tasmania Inc.

T: 1300 592 050

E: [info@downsyndrometasmania.org.au](mailto:info@downsyndrometasmania.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/tas](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/tas)

### Victoria

#### Down Syndrome Victoria

T: (03) 9486 9600

Toll Free 1300 658 873

E: [info@dsav.asn.au](mailto:info@dsav.asn.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/vic](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/vic)

### Western Australia

#### Down Syndrome WA

T: (08) 6253 4752

E: [admin@downsyndromewa.org.au](mailto:admin@downsyndromewa.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/wa](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/wa)

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## Disclaimer

The information in this resource is general in nature and does not constitute advice. Down Syndrome Australia will not be held responsible for any decisions made as a result of using this information. The contents of the resource do not constitute medical and legal advice and should not be relied on as such.



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[www.downsyndrome.org.au](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au)



Down Syndrome  
Australia



# Checklist

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## Turning 13

Make sure your teenager is staying safe online when they use the internet. There are a range of Easy Read guides and websites on safety and digital skills.

Apply for a Travel Card if your teenager will be using public transport.

Apply for a Companion Card to cover the cost of an attendant if your teenager attends eligible venues and events. This can also be done for older teenagers or adults.

## Turning 14

When a teenager turns 14 their parents no longer have access to their personal medical details via My Health Record. Visit the My Health Record website to organise a nominated representative.

Your teenager can have their own myGov account to link government services and help with administration.

Consider opening a bank account for your teenager to receive government payments or wages.

## Turning 15

Get started on your Disability Support Claim when your teenager turns 15 years and 9 months. They will only be paid the DSP when they turn 16 years old.

Teenagers 15 and older can have their own Medicare card if they want to access medical services without the assistance of a parent or carer.

If your teenager does not have a driver's license or passport, find out about how to get a photo identification card.



## Turning 16

Find out about the Centrelink payments that your teenager may be eligible for. Contact the Centrelink Disability, Sickness and Carers line on **13 27 17**. You can ask about your teenager's eligibility for the Disability Support Pension, Youth Disability Supplement, and Pensioner Education Supplement.

If your teenager requires assistance with managing their DSP, they can choose a person to act as a nominee. Contact Centrelink to find out more about Centrelink nominees.

If you receive a Carer Payment or Carer Allowance from Centrelink your payments will change when your child turns 16. This is done when your child is 15 years and 9 months old. You should be advised of this via your myGov inbox.

## Turning 17

Your teenager may already be accessing the NDIS but if not, you can get information about eligibility on the NDIS website. You can also contact the NDIS by calling **1800 800 110**.

If you would like to continue to be a NDIS plan nominee for your child, you should get in contact with the NDIS well before they turn 18 to organise this.

If you would like your child to have full control of their NDIS plan when they turn 18, you have to make sure their contact details and important information are correct prior to their 18th birthday.

Consider if the goals set out in your teenager's NDIS plan are still relevant and whether a review is needed. This can be done at your next scheduled review, or you can request a change of circumstances review.

If you think School Leaver Employment Supports would be relevant to your child, discuss this with your NDIS Planner as part of the Plan review.

Think about the capacity building supports your teenager might need to reach their goal of living independently and discuss these at your next NDIS planning meeting.

Explore options for employment and employment support, including Disability Employment Supports (DES), and other employment options.



## Turning 18

Learn about supported decision-making so you can support your teenager as they become more independent and capable of making their own decisions.

Not all young people with Down syndrome will need a legal guardian appointed when they turn 18. Find out more about guardianship and whether it may be required in your situation.

Decide whether you will continue to be a NDIS Plan Nominee for your teenager, or whether your child will have full control of their NDIS plan. You should aim to do this before their 18th birthday.