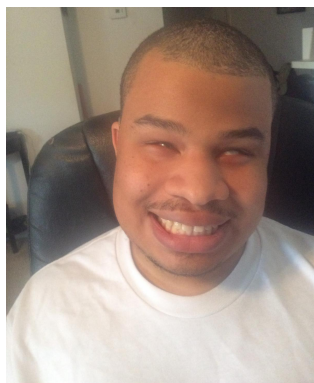




**A Quarterly Publication
Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities**

Self-Care as A Self-Advocate- A Purposeful Pursuit



by Billy Pickens, ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator

Recently, I had the amazing chance to attend a conference in Georgia where ECAC partnered with Tennessee's Parent Center in sharing our combined successes and challenges serving youth with disabilities in our state. In addition to presenting, I also was able to attend sessions as a listener. One of these sessions focused on the importance of having a life outside of advocacy, specifically taking time out of the day to do fun activities not related to advocacy. With much of the audience being parents and professionals, I pointed out my unique perspective as a self-advocate who feels a need to advocate every day in every aspect of life in order to find true happiness. However, I left this discussion thinking deeper about ways that I could show the world my identity beyond a self-advocate and celebrate more of what life has to offer.

To be clear, I love being an advocate for myself and others. It will always be a part of who I am and what I stand for. However, there is so much more to me than advocacy and I want the world to see more of that.

I believe many people with disabilities understand this feeling but sometimes we are constantly on guard

in a world where true belonging can be hard to find. For this reason, I want to begin a new series with tips that can help us see our full identity and find moments to simply enjoy life. Instead of just focusing on self-care tips, I want to focus on ways we can advocate with purpose. While we are unique, we are no different in our shared experience of the ups and downs life has to offer. I hope you will join me in this journey as we embrace our true selves together.

APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS & ACCEPTANCE MONTH!

A Word from the Experts...



by Jaxson E., ECAC Junior Youth Advisory Team Member

Hi, my name is Jaxson. I love animals. I am on a swim team and a tennis team. I'm going to be a vet when I grow up. And, I have Autism. What that means for me is that my brain processes information differently than most people. I sometimes need to move a lot because my body has a hard time sitting still. It can be hard to focus and block out noises so I get distracted sometimes. I can also become super focused on a special interest or something I enjoy, and I may have trouble shifting attention to what I need to focus on. I have trouble talking to others and sometimes I don't always know how to respond when someone talks to me. Sometimes I don't like to be around food or smells. Sometimes I flap my hands and jump (especially when I'm excited). Sometimes I get overwhelmed or my brain gets stuck on

something and it's hard to move on. We are all different in many ways and just because I have Autism doesn't mean that I'm not just like you. I am kind, I am a good friend, I am smart and I have a great sense of humor.

Autism makes me unique, but I can still do anything that I want to do.



by Khloe S., ECAC Junior Youth Advisory Team Member

When I was just a little girl, I received the diagnosis of Autism. I was non-verbal until I was five. I have found my voice through riding horses and competing in rodeo. Throughout life, I have faced many obstacles. Over the past couple of years, I have begun advocating for others and myself. My goal is to share my story empower others to be the best version of them self. Do not let a diagnosis determine where you will end up!

"This world needs YOU!"

by Zay HB., ECAC Junior Youth Advisory Team Member

Hi! My name is Zay. I am in the sixth grade. It is hard for me to be in school because I have dyslexia. That means I have a hard time reading and writing but it does NOT mean I can't learn. Other interesting facts



about me include: I am a great gymnast, and I'm very good at soccer and I'm looking forward to learning mountain climbing this summer.

I am participating in ECAC's Junior Youth Advisory Team because I want to help other kids with learning challenges. I want to learn to advocate better for myself and help other kids advocate as well. Having disabilities like mine, dyslexia, doesn't stop me from being able to do whatever I want to do. If I put my mind to it I can do it and that's something I want everyone else to know they can do too!

Whoever you are reading this article (and just to put it out into the world) I want everyone to know you can do anything! I want to remind you no matter hard it is you can try and you can do it. I need you guys to know just because you have a disability doesn't mean you're lazy or "not smart." All it means is you're different and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Being different is what makes you stronger so make your difference a part of who you are and be proud of yourself! This world needs YOU!

North Carolina's Got Talent!

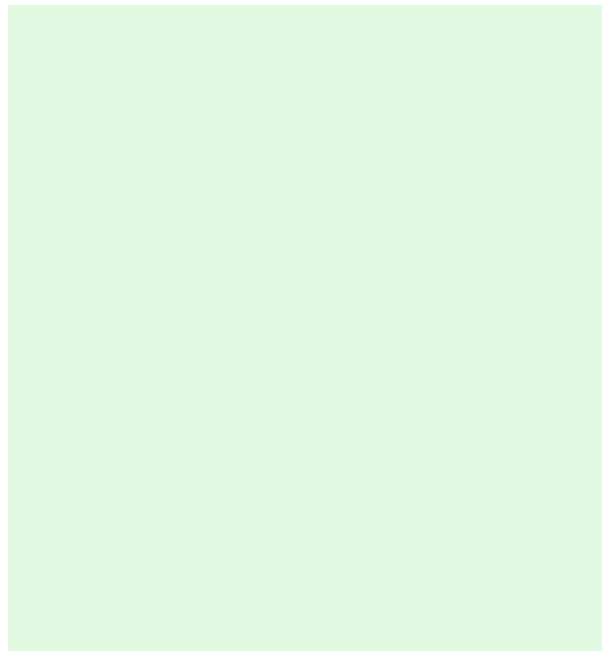
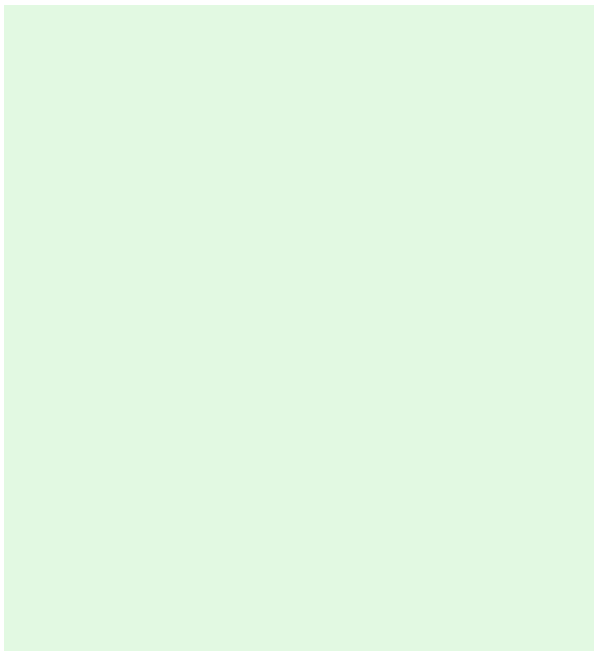
YEP's **NCGT** column is here to put a spotlight on the many talents and abilities of N.C. Youth & Young Adults with Disabilities ages 5 to 26. The format of submissions can be a poem, artwork, blog, video, song, essay, article, presentation, an "About me" article, you name it.

ECAC's Youth Advisory Team then reviews the submissions and chooses which ones to feature.



Selected entries receive a \$25 Visa gift card in the mail!

And the Winners Are...





Kaelyn F.
Age 15
Forsyth County

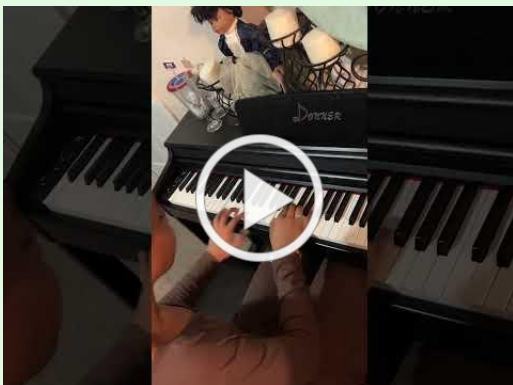


Eli A.
Age 18
Iredell County



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN to
"Born This Way"](#)

Trevor B..
Age 21
Cabarrus County



Jacqueline M.

Age 16
Onslow County

Zach & Zeke C.

Age 15
Wake County

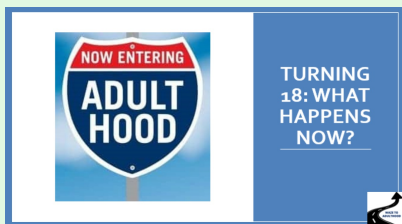
OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS!



Turning 18: What Happens Now?

***A FREE Webinar for North Carolina Youth
with Disabilities***

**Monday, May 15th
6:30pm - 8:30pm**



Turning 18 is a big deal! It is when you are considered an adult. For some of you, this feeling may be very exciting and long overdue. For some of you, it may feel scary and seem like a world of the unknown. And some may not have any feelings about it at all.



Students who attend the entire event will be entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Visa Gift Card!

**5 Winners Will Be
Selected!**

In this zoom training, we are going to talk about some things you need to know and prepare for when it comes to Turning 18. You may ask "Why are we talking about these things?". Well, these things are important when it comes to self-advocacy. We want you to know what to expect and your rights when you turn 18 years old.

This format for this event is a Zoom Meeting. Attendees are asked to have their cameras on and microphones muted during this presentation, except for when called on.

Youth can be accompanied by their parent or caregiver.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!

Do You Have a Plan for After High School?

ECAC in partnership with Disability: IN North Carolina is pleased to offer the STAR program. The STAR program offers Pre-Employment Transition Services* training including:

1. Job and career exploration
2. Self-advocacy training
3. Work readiness training.

The STAR classes are provided during the school day, as an



STAR
Student Transition
Assistance Resources
PROGRAM

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) in partnership with Disability:IN North Carolina is pleased to announce that our successful STAR Program continues to expand across the state. We are now offering virtual summer courses on self-advocacy and workplace readiness from June 12 - July 26, 2023. The full schedule is below.

Does Your Child With A Disability Have A Plan For Post-High School?
The STAR program offers Pre-ETS training services including 1) job and career exploration, 2) self-advocacy training, and 3) work readiness training. The STAR classes are provided during the school day, as an after-school program, and as a summer program offered virtually.

What Are Participants Saying About Star?
"The STAR program is very engaging for each student and a learning experience for both students and families. STAR helps families by providing tools and information to better understand your student with disabilities and preparing students with disabilities with the tools they need once they leave high school." - Parent of enrolled Star Student

Is My Child Eligible?
The STAR Program is open to high school students (ages 14 - 22) from all N.C. counties. Students with disabilities enrolled in the Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC), Occupational Course of Study (OCS), Extended Content Standards (ECS) or have a 504 plan are eligible. The STAR program serves students who attend public schools, charter schools, private schools, and home schools.

When Are The Star Courses Offered?
STAR is a virtual program and is offered throughout the school year and the summer. The classes may be offered individually or in a group session. The schedule of upcoming classes is below.

**CLICK HERE TO LEARN
MORE!**

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NC YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM
JULY 16-19, 2023
NC STATE UNIVERSITY, RALEIGH

NCYLF IS AN EVENT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES AGES 15-30. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY AIMED AT EMPOWERING, SKILL STRENGTHENING, AND EVOLVING THE FUTURE GENERATION OF DISABILITY RIGHTS LEADERS. NCYLF DELEGATES FIND THEIR VOICE AS ADVOCATES THROUGH FUN AND ENGAGING ACTIVITIES. THIS LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAM IS FREE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM!

Youth Leadership Forum is an event for youth and young adults with disabilities between the ages 15 and 30. This event is to support them with transition skills whether it is going from high school to college, college to work, moving out of parents' home to living independently, etc. This 4-day opportunity encourages youth and young adults with disabilities to practice advocacy in their lives, whether individually or in the community. NCYFL builds young leaders while enabling them to experience independence and find their voice as advocates through fun and engaging activities. This life-changing program is **FREE** to all participants and provides all requested accommodations.

The 2023 NCYLF will be held **July 16th-19th, 2023 at North Carolina State University**. Delegates will get a taste of college life by staying in the dorms, eating in the dining halls, learning in the meeting rooms, and hanging out in dorm lounges. We cover all costs of the forum, including meals, lodging, and meeting materials. You will need to bring your awesome self, linens, clothes, medicine, durable medical equipment, hygiene products, and any other items that are necessary.

Application due April 25th, delegates will be selected and notified by May 15th.

CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS & APPLICATION

**Expect, Engage, Empower: Successful
Transitions for All**



May 10, 2023
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

REGISTER HERE!

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is excited to announce an upcoming kickoff event for the transition initiative, Expect, Engage, Empower: Successful Transitions for All.

About the Event

Improving how we address transition services for youth with disabilities and their families is a critical need that will only be improved through prioritized and collaborative efforts. As young adults prepare to move from school to postsecondary education, community living, and competitive integrated employment, effective transition planning can help them become independent, productive adults. The Expect, Engage, Empower initiative is an opportunity to bring together various stakeholders to explore potential strategies and innovative approaches to address transition for children and youth with disabilities.

North Carolina Inclusion Summit



June 26th - 27th, 2023

We welcome:

- Individuals with disabilities and their families
- Community members
- Researchers
- Graduate students
- Advocates
- Administrators
- Community-based service providers
- Employers
- and all others who participate in inclusive practices across the lifespan

7th Annual Inclusion Summit

The Annual Inclusion Summit brings various disability inclusion stakeholders together to discuss current practices and future innovations. Thus, we invite participants and presenters from among educators, school administrators, related service providers, individuals with disabilities and their families, employers of individuals with disabilities, community-based service providers, vocational support service providers, researchers, policymakers, and all others who participate in inclusive practices across the lifespan.

There will be something for everyone!

This year's summit promises to be an exciting and informative experience, featuring relevant and motivating speakers, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities.

By attending this event, you will have the chance to connect with fellow educators, parents, and community members who share your passion for creating inclusive environments that foster learning and growth for all individuals.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

TRANSITION RESOURCES

**New Updated Tip Sheet for Young
Adults from Transitions ACR:**

My "Must Have" Papers

Becoming a young adult means a lot of paperwork! Real IDs, Social Security cards, passports, medical records, employment records and more. It can be overwhelming. How do you know the most important documents to hold onto, and those you can toss out? Or which documents to carry with you at all times and which to keep safely at home? This new 4 page, well organized tip sheet can help you answer those questions, and others. The goal is to make the transition to adulthood just a little bit easier - for all people involved, both the young adults and their supporters.



My "Must Have" Papers Managing the Paperwork of Adulthood

Tip Sheet Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research Revised March 2023

There are some personal papers that everybody must have, such as a birth certificate, license if you drive a car (or State ID if you don't), or a student ID if you are a college student. Here are some tips about keeping and protecting your important personal records and information. If this feels like a lot of information, sometimes an older family member or friend with experience can help you acquire and organize these documents.



Essential Documents to Have

You should bring two of these with you to complete work-related paperwork.

 Birth Certificate*	 Social Security Card*	 State ID or Driver's License or REAL ID (keep on you when out)	 Passport*
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*These items should be kept very secure. We suggest a fire-proof box, safe in your home or a safety deposit box at your bank.

Your license (or ID) is the only one of these essential documents which you should carry on you at all times. You won't need to access the others very often so you (perhaps with your guardians) can decide who should store them. Note that a birth certificate and social security card can be replaced but they require some effort. Also a passport needs to be renewed every 10 years. For things like confirming your identity, often a passport can be used instead of the other essential documents listed here. Also be careful as to who has your social security number.

Items to Keep on You When You Are Away from Home (Either Physically or on Your Phone)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Driver's License, School or Work ID<input type="checkbox"/> Green Card or Visa, if applicable<input type="checkbox"/> Bus or Subway Pass if you use one<input type="checkbox"/> SNAP Card (if you qualify for food benefits/food assistance through a state program)<input type="checkbox"/> Health Insurance Cards (medical, dental, vision, prescription, etc.)<input type="checkbox"/> Roadside Assistance Info (like AAA card)<input type="checkbox"/> Important phone numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Appointment Book / Calendar (if you keep this on your phone, remember to keep your phone charged and backed up)<input type="checkbox"/> ATM Card (only if needed)<input type="checkbox"/> Who to call in case of emergency (most cell phones offer a place to add emergency contacts that anyone can access in an emergency)<input type="checkbox"/> List of allergies, medications & the doctor who prescribes them
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[Click Here to Read and Download "My Must Have Papers" Tip Sheet](#)

Turning 18 in North Carolina What Individuals with Disabilities Need to Consider

Turning 18 is a big deal for all individuals. An 18-year-old is legally considered an adult in North Carolina. Therefore, when a child turns 18, they are the person that makes legal, financial, medical, and educational decisions in their life. For some individuals with disabilities, this will not be an issue. Others may need support.

This Fact Sheet provides important information on things that you should consider as you or your loved one turns 18.

[Click Here to the Turning 18 in NC Fact Sheet](#)

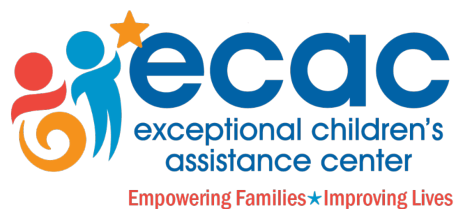
Turning 18 in North Carolina What Individuals with Disabilities Need to Consider



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