

Financial Independence Checklist



While these checklists can be used as a resource by themselves, they are meant to be used as a companion with MDA's Access to Financial Independence workshop. (Find it at [MDA.org/AccessWorkshops](https://www.mda.org/accessworkshops).) Please use the checklist that best fits your situation.

While not all the steps will apply to you, the checklists can help you and your loved ones organize your needs related to financial independence.

Parents and Caregivers

- Complete **MDA's Access to Financial Independence workshop**.
- Help your child learn about money and finances by introducing **activities and games**.
- Consider establishing a savings account for your child at a local bank.
- Create opportunities for an older child to earn money through chores or helping neighbors.
- Talk to your child about debt and credit, especially before taking out any loans in their name. Introduce them to **online activities** that can improve their financial literacy.
- When attending **IEP/504 Plan** meetings with the school, begin talking to your team about a transition plan to adulthood by age 16. Build transition steps into the IEP or 504 plan, including independent living and employment supports.
- Learn if your child qualifies for any benefits.
- If your child is enrolled in Medicaid, ask about **waiver programs** that could help pay for additional services.



- Plan ahead, develop your own **living will**, and speak with a financial professional about financial preparedness, such as a **special needs trust** that your child can use if they inherit money or are granted a settlement.
- If your child is interested in employment, help them **explore their options**.
- Talk to your child about financial goals, and make a list of things they will want to buy in the future.
- Complete a **budgeting activity**.

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Adults Living With Neuromuscular Diseases

- Complete **MDA's Access to Financial Independence workshop**.
- If you are disabled and unable to continue working or participating in **substantial gainful activity (SGA)**, check to see if you meet income and resource guidelines for **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**. If you qualify, apply right away.
- Report any changes in income or assets to Social Security through your **my Social Security** online portal.
- Speak with a financial advisor to see if an **ABLE account** can help you.
- Look into employment programs such as **Ticket to Work** and **Vocational Rehabilitation**.
- If you are qualified for an employment program, create your **plan to achieve self-support (PASS)**.
- Contact your local **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)** program to ask for benefits counseling support.
- Organize all hard copies of benefits communication, applications, supporting documentation, and appeals.
- Calculate your debt. List debtors, amounts, due dates, and payoff amounts.
- Complete a **budget worksheet**.
- Establish power of attorney and healthcare proxy if needed.

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Young Adults

- Complete **MDA's Access to Financial Independence workshop**.
 - Learn about money and finances by **listening to a podcast, playing a game, or using online resources**.
 - Research local banks and credit unions to determine if a checking and/or savings account is right for you.
 - Complete a **budget worksheet**. If you are still living with caregivers who pay bills for you, ask how much different items cost. That way you will understand what it costs to be independent in the future.
 - If you receive **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**, your benefit eligibility **will be reviewed** when you turn 18. Be sure to gather necessary information for your review, including names of medications, dates of any hospital stays and doctor visits, work activity, school information, school and mental health counseling information, and names and contact information for teachers and counselors.
 - If you receive SSDI as a dependent child, you may be asked to provide proof of your disability to **continue to qualify** as an adult with a disability. Gather dates of diagnoses, doctor contact information, and school information.
 - Work with your parents/caregivers to find out if an **ABLE account** is right for you.
- Look into employment programs such as **Ticket to Work** and **Vocational Rehabilitation**.
 - When attending **IEP/504 Plan** meetings at school, advocate for your needs and interests. Work with your teachers, guidance counselor, and family to put together a transition plan for when you leave school. Build transition steps into your IEP or 504 plan early, including independent living and employment supports.
 - If you plan to attend college, learn about **responsible borrowing practices** and begin looking into **scholarship** and **grant** opportunities.
 - Talk to your parents or caregivers about your financial goals, and make a list of things you will want to buy in the future.



For questions about financial services and resources, contact the MDA Resource Center at 833-ASK-MDA1 or resourcecenter@mdausa.org.