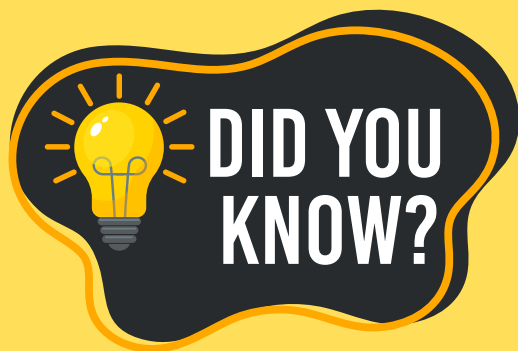


# **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:**

## ***Staying in school until age 21***



**In New Jersey, students with disabilities can receive special education and related services through the school year in which they turn 21, or until they graduate with a high school diploma.**

**18-21 programs focus on vocational training, independent living skills, and transition services.**

# ELIGIBILITY

**Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) can stay in school until they are 21. However, if a student accepts a high school diploma before that time, they are no longer entitled to free appropriate public education.**

**There can be a voluntary return, a student with a disability who is 16-21 and has left school can return, provided they have not received a High School diploma.**

**If a school district failed to provide a student with an appropriate education before they graduated or turned 21, the student may be eligible for "compensatory education" services.**

# 18-21 YEAR PROGRAMS

**Sometimes these programs are called transition programs. They are IEP driven services for students who have completed high school credits but need continued support before transitioning to adulthood.**

**Some examples are vocational & work based learning which focuses on job sampling, supported employment, and job coaching.**

**There are independent and life skills such as financial literacy, cooking, and cleaning.**

**Additionally, there are college and community based instruction which helps prepare for college life, community integration, social skills, and self advocacy.**

**There are also hybrid programs which combine everything.**

# **WHAT CAN A PARENT DO WHEN TOLD TO “LEAVE”**

**When a school district denies access to an 18-21 year program, immediately request an iep meeting in writing, file for mediation or due process, and invoke “stay-put” rights to maintain services.**

**Request an emergency IEP meeting in writing, stating the need for continued services.**

**If the IEP meeting does not resolve the issue, file for due process, which keeps the student in their current placement (stay put) until the dispute is resolved.**

**Use specific state law/guidelines, which can be found [here](#).  
Also DOCUMENT EVERYTHING.**

**You can also request an independent educational evaluation, seek legal counsel, and contact the regional center/vocational rehab center.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
[CLICK HERE.](#)**