



YOUR 18-YEAR OLD: MAKING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

You thought this day would never come – all those sleepless nights, diaper changes and the joys of parenthood, and now your child has turned 18!

Eighteen is a major milestone which comes with freedom and a plethora of other privileges. These privileges can seem overwhelming at first -- and when it comes to the law? Everything changes when your child turns 18.

When your teen turns 18, there are so many things that they can legally do. They can vote in elections, they can get married without your consent and they can purchase a home. But your teen can also now go to jail rather than Youth Detention Center, gamble away their birthday money on the Internet and get sued. In nearly every state in the union, an 18-year-old is considered an adult, so now is a good time to sit down with your newly-minted “adult” and go over all the things that they can now do and the serious legal ramifications if they make bad choices.

When it comes to the law, the path is now clear for your 18-year-old to reap the benefits of adulthood as well as suffer the consequences:

JAIL

- Legal shenanigans that once may have been punished by grounding or exacting a long lecture from your parents now can land a teen in jail.**
- The consequences of “egging” the neighbor’s house (vandalism) or stealing something from a store (petit theft) may have once been minor, but those days are over.**
- There are even situations where a minor drug possession charge that had been overlooked at 17 can result in some jail time at 18.**

It is extremely important that you speak to your teen about the impact of breaking the law now that they are 18 and the legal consequences of such an action. This is especially true if your teen is still in high school and is influenced by their peers.

NO RESTRICTION ON DRIVING

- Many states have driving laws that restrict the hours and terms under which new, young drivers can get behind the wheel. In Florida as well as in other states, once a driver reaches the age of 18, they may drive unsupervised and without time limits.**

So sit down and have that important talk with your teen and make sure that he or she fully understands the benefits of adulthood as well as the legal consequences.