During the time between childhood and adulthood, adolescents go through many physical and emotional changes. These years can be difficult and confusing as teens make the transition toward independent living and decision making as adults. This transition includes taking on more responsibility for their health care. Once they turn age 18, there are some important legal changes that take place that can affect how health care is delivered.

MOVING FROM PEDIATRIC TO ADULT HEALTH CARE

Switching care from a Pediatric to an adult Primary Care Provider (PCP) can happen any time after age 18 but typically happens between age 18 and 23. Some young adults already have a PCP (such as a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner) who cares for both children and adults. Although they may not need to switch their PCP, they will become more independent in their relationship and communication with their PCP.

ADVOCATING FOR THEMSELVES

It is important for your teen to learn how to advocate for their health care needs. This may include meeting with their medical providers alone for part or all of an office visit. We recommend that by at least 12 years of age, your child is spending some time one-on-one with their medical providers so they can learn to ask and answer health care questions for themselves.

BECOMING INDEPENDENT

Both parent and PCPs need to work together to educate adolescents about their medical conditions and any medications they may take (such as prescription names and dosages). Teaching them how to call in their own prescriptions to the preferred pharmacy will prepare them to be independent.

It is important that your adolescent understand how to access health care, make their own appointments, and how and when to use GHCMyChartSM. Learning how to deal with problems and emergencies includes providing them with GHC-SCW clinic phone numbers and discussing when to access Urgent Care versus when to go to an Emergency Room. Teach them to call the clinic first for advice on where to access the care they need. For life threatening emergencies, they should call 911.

Visit ghcsaw.com for GHC-SCW clinic locations and phone numbers. We also recommend members download the GHCMyChartSM app on their smartphone or tablet.

Encourage an open and honest relationship with their PCP, including communicating with their Care Team through GHCMyChartSM or by calling with concerns when necessary.
WISCONSIN LEGAL ISSUES

- Wisconsin law allows health care providers to confidently discuss, diagnose, and treat minors regarding mental health and drug use beginning at age 12, and to address reproductive health without parental consent at age 14. These laws\(^1\) address the right for adolescents to have confidential communication and allows the health care provider to provide education, evaluation, and treatment for mental and reproductive health issues that they might not seek care for if they were required to have parental consent. This will be reflected in access changes you will see in your adolescents medical record information in GHCFamilyChart from age 12 to 17.

- When your adolescent turns 18, they become legally responsible for their own health care decisions and communication with their PCP. GHC-SCW staff will no longer be allowed to discuss anything with parents about care or share any personal health information without written consent. If a young adult wishes to allow their parent/legal guardian some or all access to their health care information, they must complete the Authorization to Disclose Health Information Form to notify GHC-SCW of this preference.

- Health insurance can change once your child turns 18. It will be important to determine whether your child will still be covered under your insurance policy until age 26, or whether they will need to have their own insurance through BadgerCare (Wisconsin’s Medicaid), or another health insurance plan.

- All adults over age 18 should have a *Power of Attorney for Health Care and Advance Directive* document on file with their clinic. This document makes it possible for adults in Wisconsin to authorize other individuals (called health care agents) to make decisions on their behalf should they be unable to make decisions for themselves. Before age 18, parents or legal guardians are authorized to make medical decisions if their child is unable to communicate.

- GHC-SCW partners with Honoring Choices Wisconsin, an initiative of the Wisconsin Medical Society, to provide a document that meets the legal requirements of Wisconsin for the *Power of Attorney for Health Care and Advance Directive*. For more information regarding this document, consult with your provider.

- Questions about privacy? Please contact the GHC-SCW Privacy Officer at (608) 662-4899.

YOUTH WITH SPECIAL CARE NEEDS

- Adolescents with special health care needs may have more complex issues to understand and deal with than the average young adult. As part of the transition process from pediatric to adult medical care, their PCP and team RN will create a comprehensive health care plan with you and your child. This plan should be completed during the first year of enrollment in our transition registry and is ideally updated every 6 months to help educate other health care providers in case of emergencies. It will include a brief overview of significant health issues, up-to-date medication lists, and specialist’s contact information.

- For more resources, visit the “Got Transition” website, [www.gottransition.org](http://www.gottransition.org).

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\(^1\) State statutes can be accessed by going to [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/rsb/stats.html](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/rsb/stats.html)


Substance Abuse Treatment (Wis. Stat. § 51.47 & Wis. Stat. § 51.30)