

In New Hampshire students have decisions to make about graduating or exiting school between the ages of 18 – 21. Students are eligible to remain in school receiving special education services up to the age of 21 or when they receive all the credits needed to receive a general education diploma. Students who have not earned enough credits to graduate and want to exit school prior to 18 can make that choice with certain considerations.

Diploma vs Certificate of Completion:

- In order to receive a diploma, students have to achieve the competencies in classes to receive the credit. Students who have goals to participate in college-based degree programs will likely be required to have a diploma sometimes referred to as General Education Diploma. It will be important to decide this early (age 14) so the school team can ensure to assign classes in time to meet all credit criteria for graduation.
- A Certificate of Completion is an option in most schools meaning the student met the goals in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) but did not receive credit showing full competency was mastered for the subject area. Most post-secondary college programs will not accept students who do not have a General Education Diploma.

Exiting School Options

1. School districts are no longer educationally responsible once a student has achieved all the credits required to obtain a general education diploma. You may want to think about how to spread out those credit achievements to also permit transition activities to happen. Students will exit once credits are received.
2. Students are no longer eligible for education services at the age of 21 in New Hampshire. If a student has not achieved the credits needed for a general education diploma, they will be exited from school on their 21st birthday.
3. Students can choose to exit school after 18 and prior to 21 years of age who are eligible with Gateways Community Services and apply to receive long term funding and services at that time. Students cannot receive funding through Gateways Community Services while enrolled in school. To exit school prior to 21 and without a diploma, the student must be ready to enter the adult system. This means that they have been given all the opportunities and skills to transition to adult long-term services successfully. This must be determined **at least one year prior** to exiting school and is something the whole team will need to review and consider. Your Gateways Community Services Service Coordinator will enter in the date of need into the Projected Service Needs List (See PSNL Fact Sheet).

Gateways Community Services would like to attend all school meetings so we can support students and their families to understand their options and to time transitions and exits from school.