

# Checklist: Send Your Kid to College



Sending your child to college tends to come with complex emotions—they're entering the "adult" phase of their lives but may still be dependent on you in many ways. This checklist can help you set them (and you!) up for a successful transition.

## Healthcare

**Generally, your child will be able to stay on your health insurance throughout college (all the way up to age 26). However, you may also want to consider supplemental coverage. Plus, many parents don't realize there's an estate planning component to sending your child off to school.**

### Review current coverage

This is especially important if your child is headed to an out-of-state school. Look at what providers and facilities are in network where they're headed.

### Check the school's health insurance offerings

Many schools offer their own insurance plan and/or on-campus healthcare for an additional fee. Pay close attention to what's covered and the cost of care.

### Have your child complete a HIPAA authorization

If your child is 18, you won't be able to access their medical records in an emergency without this form.

### Create a healthcare directive with your child

Health care directives include your child's wishes for an emergency as well as medical power of attorney details. Without these documents, you may not be able to make decisions on your child's behalf if something unexpected happens.



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# Privacy considerations

After 12+ years of reviewing your child's report cards you may expect to continue the trend in college, especially if you're paying the bill. Now that your child is an adult, however, they have certain privacy rights.

## Learn about FERPA rights

Education records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Once your child either turns 18 or starts college, these privacy rights transfer from you to your child. You can only access their grades and records if they consent.

## Read the FERPA notice

Universities must send parents a FERPA each year outlining their specific policies on disclosing protected student information. Some colleges release information to you if you claim your student as a dependent on your tax return. Others may release information if certain conditions are met (e.g., emergencies).

## Set expectations with your child

Legal rights aside, it can be hard for children to transition to responsible adults and for parents to relinquish control. Talking to your child about your expectations around academics is important, particularly if you expect them to achieve certain goals in exchange for financial support.

# Tuition logistics

It's one thing to save for college with a 529, it's another to start writing checks. Before you make a withdrawal, make sure you:

## Know who's paying tuition

You can elect to have 529 distributions go directly to the school. Alternately, the distributions can go to you or your child, who in turn pay the school tuition.



**Tip:** Take the distribution in the same calendar year you spend the funds to simplify taxes.

## Plan to file a Form 1099-Q

Whoever receives the 529 distribution will get a Form 1099-Q. This income only needs to be reported to the IRS if it's spent on nonqualified expenses.



**Tip:** If you plan to claim education tax credits, you may want to distribute 529 funds to your student, so the 1099-Q has the same Social Security number as the tax forms associated with credits. (Form 1098-T is issued to the student.)



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## Decide what you'll spend 529 funds on

Beyond tuition, you can use 529 funds for:

- Room and board
- Books and supplies
- Computers, software, and internet access
- Special needs equipment (for students with disabilities)

You CANNOT use 529 funds to pay for:

- Transportation and travel
- Health insurance
- College applications
- Testing fees (like the SAT)
- Extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, Greek life, etc.)

# Day-to-day finances

Even if your child already has bank accounts and a sense of budgeting from their teen years, there are a few extra steps that can improve their day-to-day finances at college.

### Check their bank accounts

See which banks are popular in their college town. If their existing bank doesn't have ATM branches nearby, they may grapple with withdrawal fees or other complications. You may want to open local accounts for them or create a plan for avoiding fees.

### Talk about credit cards

Newly-minted 18-year olds tend to get multiple credit card offer letters. Consider helping your child open a credit card before they head to college to get them started with responsible habits. Make sure you explain credit scores so they understand the importance of on-time payments. It's also a good idea to explain the risk associated with high-interest debt.



**Tip:** Make sure your child knows who is responsible for paying the minimum. You may want to help them link their checking account to their credit cards or even set up automatic payments to help them get started building credit.



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## Help them budget

Depending on the room and board situation, your child may be responsible for paying rent, utilities, and groceries each month. Talk to your student about what they can expect to spend each semester on food, social activities, and any extras. Be sure to review:

Meal plan vs. cooking vs. eating out

Extracurricular expenses (e.g., intramural sports or Greek life)

Entertainment (streaming services, live events, and so on)

Clothing

## Discuss income

Whether you're planning to give your child an allowance or you expect them to get a job (either during the summer or work study at school), it's important to set clear guidelines around money and income. This can help your child avoid financial stress and focus on academics.

**If you want help with any of the items in this list, or have additional questions about preparing for college (financially or otherwise), [reach out to discuss](#). In addition to supporting clients and their children, many of our Quorum team members have been through this transition personally. We're always happy to help!**

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