

Hearts & Minds: Neurodevelopment in Patients with Heart Failure & VADs

Adolescent/Young Adult (13+ years old)



Children with Heart Failure/VADs are resilient, and each has unique strengths. Some may be at higher risk for certain difficulties. Look for:

- Executive functioning difficulties, including problems with planning, problem-solving, organizing, following multi-step instructions, and completing tasks—these challenges can impact medical management, like remembering to take medicines on time or as prescribed
- Higher rates of anxiety and depression symptoms
- Restricted social connections, including friendships/romantic relationships
- Difficulties with medication adherence, including not wanting to take medicines or not wanting to feel different
- Delayed transition to adulthood, including living independently, finding employment, or pursuing education after high school

Resources

- Update IEP/504 Plan: More focus on accommodations, less on interventions at this age. Transition Service Plans are included in IEPs at 16 years old to focus on post-high school goals.
- IEP/504 Plan accommodations can apply on standardized tests (e.g., SAT/ACT), in college, and on the job
- Different professionals can provide tutoring/coaching for executive function (e.g., speech/language pathologist, psychologist, school personnel; see [CHADD.org](https://www.chadd.org) directory)
- Job Accommodation Network: resource for accommodations in the workplace, visit: askjan.org
- Guardianship vs. Power of Attorney: options to maintain involvement in legal, medical and financial decision making after your child turns 18 years old
- Behavioral/Psychological therapy: strategies for supporting mood, anxiety, and behavior; direct coaching in relaxation and coping strategies: taking medications; and transitioning to adult healthcare



Helpful Tools & Tips for Home



- Increase teen/young adult's independence in daily living and managing their medicine. Parent/caregiver support should be gradually decreased with successful practice. They should first observe a parent/caregiver, and then take the lead with support to help reach independence in:
 - *Taking the lead during appointments*
 - *Taking/refilling medicines*
 - *Learning about their medical condition*
 - *Opening bank accounts/managing finances*
 - *Transportation*
- Continue to monitor for depression and anxiety symptoms
- Talk with your child about what medical information they want to share with friends—create a script and practice it before using it at school and in the community
- Monitor social media and internet use

Having a child with medical issues can be stressful. See resources for caregivers at: div54cwsiq.wixsite.com/caregiverwellbeing/resources