

Legal Guide for New Adults Turning 18

Florida Adult Rights and Responsibilities

A guide from the Florida Bar Association, *Legal Guide for New Adults* (2009), discusses a number of legal issues related to attaining the age of majority in Florida. It provides general information—not legal advice—on the topics listed below.

Section	Contents
General Principles	Legal rights and responsibilities of adults 18 and older and emancipated minors
Consumer Protections	Florida "Lemon Law" for vehicles
Weight Loss	Florida Weight Loss Bill of Rights
Contracts	Written and other contracts and their consequences
The Court System	County and district courts, courts of appeal, Florida Supreme Court
Credit	Ratings, reports, collateral, lender discrimination
Criminal Charges	Arrest, bail, attorney, juvenile records
Drinking Laws	Legal age, driving and drinking, Open Container Law
Driving	Drop outs, license, insurance, tickets, loud music or noise
Environmental Responsibility	Garbage, hazardous substances, natural resource depletion
Employment:	Contracts, "at will" employees, workplace laws, background checks
Federal Income Tax	Responsibilities, assistance
Jury Duty	Qualifications, selection, payment, excuses, work protections
Landlord/Tenant	Leases, notice, security deposit, access, maintenance
Marriage	Legal age, license, divorce, alimony, property settlement
Paternity Issues	Safe Haven Law, divorce
Voting	Registering, absentee ballot, voting locations
Important Telephone Numbers	Lawyer referrals, Lemon Law Hotline, consumer hotline, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Worker's Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Selective Service System, and more.

Did you know...

- The age of majority (legal adulthood) in Florida is 18 years of age in most circumstances.
- The legal drinking age in Florida is 21 years of age.
- Young people ages 16 and 17 may marry with parental approval. Adults 18 and older do not need parental approval.
- A contract does not have to be written to be legally enforceable.
- Falsely applying for an I.D. is a felony in Florida.

- Students under the age of 18 with poor school attendance or who drop out of school before earning their diplomas will have their driver's licenses suspended.
- Juvenile records, including those that are sealed or expunged, may be available to federal, state, and local agencies as well as companies that purchase legal data.
- It is illegal for a driver or a passenger to have an open container of alcohol in a vehicle.
- It is illegal to operate a "mechanical sound-making device" in a vehicle at a loud volume that can be heard from 25 feet away (or closer in certain areas such as hospital zones.)
- A parent may drop off a newborn infant within three days of birth to someone at any hospital emergency room, fire station, or emergency medical service facility without questions or legal consequences.
- Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), rights regarding access to school records and other educational information transfer to students at the age of 18 or to students of any age who are in postsecondary school.
- Legal male residents of the United States must register with the Selective Service System in a 60 day timeframe beginning 30 days before their 18th birthday and ending 30 days afterwards.
- Non-native residents older than 18 and younger than 26 must register with the Selective Service System within 30 days of becoming a resident. Note that the requirement is legal residence not citizenship.
- See "Legal Rights for Students with Disabilities Turning 18" in the A-Z Library for (1) an overview of the rights of students who have reached the age of majority under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and (2) a resource on legal guardianship.

Resource

Justice Teaching

http://www.justiceteaching.org/lesson_plans.shtml

This initiative of the Florida Supreme Court was developed to improve the average citizen's knowledge of legal principles and the legal system. The site contains lesson plans and resources for teaching elementary, middle, and high school students, including ESE students. The "You and the Law" lesson plan and PowerPoint presentation are designed to accompany the *Legal Guide for New Adults* publication.

References

Florida Bar Association. (2009, September). *Legal guide for new adults*. Tallahassee, FL: Author. Available at <http://www.floridabar.org/tfb/TFBConsum.nsf/48e76203493b82ad852567090070c9b9/34557641d4c2f7c885256b2f006c5753?OpenDocument> Also available in Spanish and pdf format.

Selective Service System. (2010, March 8). *Who must register*. Arlington, VA: Author. Available at <http://www.sss.gov/FSwho.htm>

U.S. Department of Education. (2010, February). Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>