



FOR FAMILIES OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM

After Graduation

Planning where your son or daughter will live,
work and belong in the years after their program
ends.

The people

The place

A life, for life

The days

A one-year plan

Money & legal basics



THE FOUNDATION FOR
Independent Living

THE FOUNDATION FOR Independent Living



Look for the people who stay.

After graduation, the people around your son or daughter matter more than any building: the coach who helps with laundry and budgets, and who notices when something is off. Long-serving staff mean fewer goodbyes and deeper trust.

At FIL: Elvith Araus has been an Independent Living Coach for about 18 years, working one-on-one with residents in their own homes. The best part, Elvith says, is getting to know “who they are, what they think, what they love, what they want.”

Ask on any visit: How long have your coaches been here? · Who would my son or daughter see day to day? · How many staff per resident, and who is there at night?

THE PLACE



Look for their own front door with help close by: a private apartment and lease, a place to gather, and staff on site at every hour. **At FIL:** private one- and two-bedroom apartments at Cypress Shores with a pool; a main campus a short walk away with the Healthy Café, fitness center and Med Room; and on-site residential staff available 24/7.

Ask: Will they have their own lease? · Where do residents gather? · Who helps with medications and doctors' visits?



Look for a place people stay for decades.

The best sign that a community works is how long people choose to stay. Graduation is one transition; you want the next home to be the last move, not the next stop.

At FIL: Luise Mishner's family was one of the families who founded FIL in 1985, and Luise has lived here ever since: 41 years of her own home, her own friends and her own routines. Many residents have been with us for decades; one told us what makes them proudest is taking care of their cat and their apartment on their own.

Ask: How long do residents usually stay? · Could we talk with a resident and a family?

THE DAYS

237

activities in one month at FIL (September 2024)

33

outings into the community

30 of 30

days with something on the calendar

Campus life is the hardest thing to replace: the clubs, the games, the friends down the hall. Look for a real calendar, not a brochure list, with work, fitness, clubs and outings every week, and everything optional.

Ask: Can we see last month's calendar? · How do residents get to jobs and outings? · Can my son or daughter join an activity during a visit?

Start the final year with the end in mind.

65%

have a paid job a year after a college program for students with ID

61%

are still living with family

31%

rent a place of their own

Adult services depend on eligibility and often have waiting lists, so an early start matters. Source: Think College, TPSID Annual Report 2024–25, p. 31.

Fall

Talk as a family about goals. List two or three living options, and ask the program team what past graduates chose.

Winter

Visit your top choices together and ask the questions in this guide. Check waiting lists and apply for benefits.

Spring

Arrange a short trial stay. Line up work or volunteering near the new home, and plan transportation.

Summer

Move in on a gentle schedule. Keep old friendships going and set regular family check-ins.

MONEY AND LEGAL BASICS

SSI at 18. Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income is based on the young adult's own income and assets, not the parents'.

Special needs trusts. Hold family assets for your child's benefit without disqualifying them from means-tested programs.

Decision-making. At 18, your son or daughter is a legal adult. Options range from guardianship to supported decision-making, powers of attorney and health-care surrogates; Florida also offers guardian advocacy. A special-needs planning attorney can help.

General information only, not legal or financial advice. Rules vary by state and change over time.

ABLE accounts. Tax-advantaged savings that don't count against most benefits; since 2026, open to people whose disability began before age 46.

Medicaid waivers. Many states fund home and community supports this way, but waiting lists are common, so apply early.



THE FOUNDATION FOR
Independent Living

Founded by parents in 1985 in Coconut Creek, Florida: their own apartment, about 1 staff member for every 2 residents, on-site staff 24/7, coaching, job support and a very full calendar. Private pay, about \$50,000 a year plus rent.

Try a night or two first.

An apartment, an activity, new neighbors, with no commitment. (954) 968-6472 • info@filinc.org • filinc.org