

# DIPLOMA DECISIONS:



## When Should I Decide?

Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council

### Diplomas vs. certificates

Federal law requires that transition services include a coordinated set of activities for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) with an outcome oriented process. Every Michigan youth has the right to a free and appropriate education. For students with I/DD, this should be discussed early in the IEP process before the students 9<sup>th</sup> grade year and documented in their IEP.

- ✓ Transition Teams in collaboration with each student have the authority to choose a diploma or certificate track
- ✓ A student's age eligibility is determined by their age on September 1st
- ✓ Students who turn 26 before September 1st, are no longer eligible
- ✓ Students who turn 26 after September 1st may finish that year of school

### Diplomas and Certificates

- ✓ All students on a diploma track must meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements to earn that diploma
- ✓ When a student meets the requirements for a diploma, public school services end
- ✓ Sometimes a student's team will retain eligibility by reserving a one semester class for completion at a later time
- ✓ A diploma or GED is required for many types of employment
- ✓ A diploma is not required to join the military, but recruits without a diploma or GED have a much more difficult enlistment process
- ✓ Students on a certificate of completion track can continue to receive school services until the age of 26
- ✓ Schools vary on types of certificates issued and completion programs they offer

### Certificates

A certificate of any type (completion, achievement, recognition, etc.) is not a regular high school diploma and should not be reported as such on any form that asks if an individual has achieved a high school diploma (for example, on a job application). Michigan law makes no reference to certificates and does not provide any definition of a certificate. Certificates are given, or not given, at the discretion of the local school district. A student does not have to meet the criteria of the Michigan Merit Curriculum or maintain the grade requirement to receive a certificate of completion. This allows them to focus on meeting individualized goals based on their future plans, but can limit opportunities for self-sufficiency in adulthood.

#### Erin McMahon

Erin is a graduate of Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor Michigan. Erin earned a diploma; issued at the age of 26. From age 18 through 26, Erin was involved in activities in her community to help her transition to adult life. She currently resides in an apartment, and is taking classes in the community.



### Documenting your choices

Students and their team can choose the option that makes the most sense for their future plans. Their choice must be documented in their IEP. The student and their team, determine if they will work toward a diploma or a certificate of completion. Accepting a certificate of completion can allow the student to participate in the senior graduation activities. A student who receives a certificate of completion is eligible to continue receiving special education services until the age of 26 per:

[Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\) Rule 340.1702](#)

For information or questions contact the Developmental Disabilities Council at: (517) 335-3158, or on the web at: [www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil](http://www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil)