



Guiding Youth Through the Transition Out of Foster Care

These resources for exiting foster care provide essential support for youth transitioning to independence. These resources cover a range of areas, including education, career planning, financial management, housing assistance, and mental health services. They empower youth to understand their rights, advocate for themselves, and build meaningful connections with peers and mentors. By offering tools and guidance in various aspects of life, these resources help youth navigate their transition effectively, fostering resilience and personal growth as they embark on their journey to adulthood.

Reentering Foster Care

If you're a youth who left foster care at age 17 and 9 months or older, or if it was closed after your 18th birthday and you're still under 21, you can ask the court to reopen your case for continued support. This can happen if you still qualify for extended foster care, which means you can receive help even after you turn 18. You can request the court to resume your case if it was closed within 90 days before your 18th birthday,

- [Learn more about Extended Foster Care in Pennsylvania](#)
- [Foster Care Beyond 18 Poster](#)

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) gives youth an opportunity to provide feedback about their experience in the foster care system. It is a survey designed to track how Pennsylvania (PA) has served youth, and it measures how well PA is helping foster youth prepare for adulthood.

It is important to complete the NYTD survey when you are contacted, as it provides valuable feedback on the services you've received. You may receive information about the survey via email, phone call, or regular mail. Youth who complete the survey will receive an incentive as a thank-you for participating.



To ensure you receive the survey and any updates, please make sure to provide your current contact information, such as your phone number, email address, or mailing address to your IL worker. This will help them reach you when it's time to complete the survey.

- [NYTD Brochure for Youth](#)

Parenting Youth in Transition

As a parenting youth, you should receive all the support and services that any young person in foster care receives. This includes helping you find people who can be there for you long-term, helping you with a place to stay while you're getting ready to be an adult, and providing any other support to make sure your needs are met.

If you are pregnant or parenting, your needs will include taking care of your child and learning parenting skills. This could include parenting support, instruction, and assistance in getting childcare. It should also include support in arranging for any services that your child needs.

You may also be eligible for certain public benefits if you are pregnant or parenting. Examples may include Food Stamps; Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and possibly TANF. You are entitled to help in applying for these benefits as well.

- [Teen Parents in Foster Care: Fact Sheet](#)
- [WIC Outreach Brochure](#)
- [What to Take to WIC Appointment](#)
- [Foster Care SNAP Time Limit Exemption](#)

Aftercare Checklist for Youth

The Aftercare Checklist for Youth is an essential tool that helps young individuals prepare for independence by organizing critical documents and support systems. It encompasses important identification, medical records, educational achievements, employment materials, housing information, legal documents, and contact details for caseworkers and trusted individuals. This comprehensive checklist empowers youth to manage their identity, health, education, and legal matters while ensuring they have a reliable support network to lean on as they navigate their transition to adulthood.

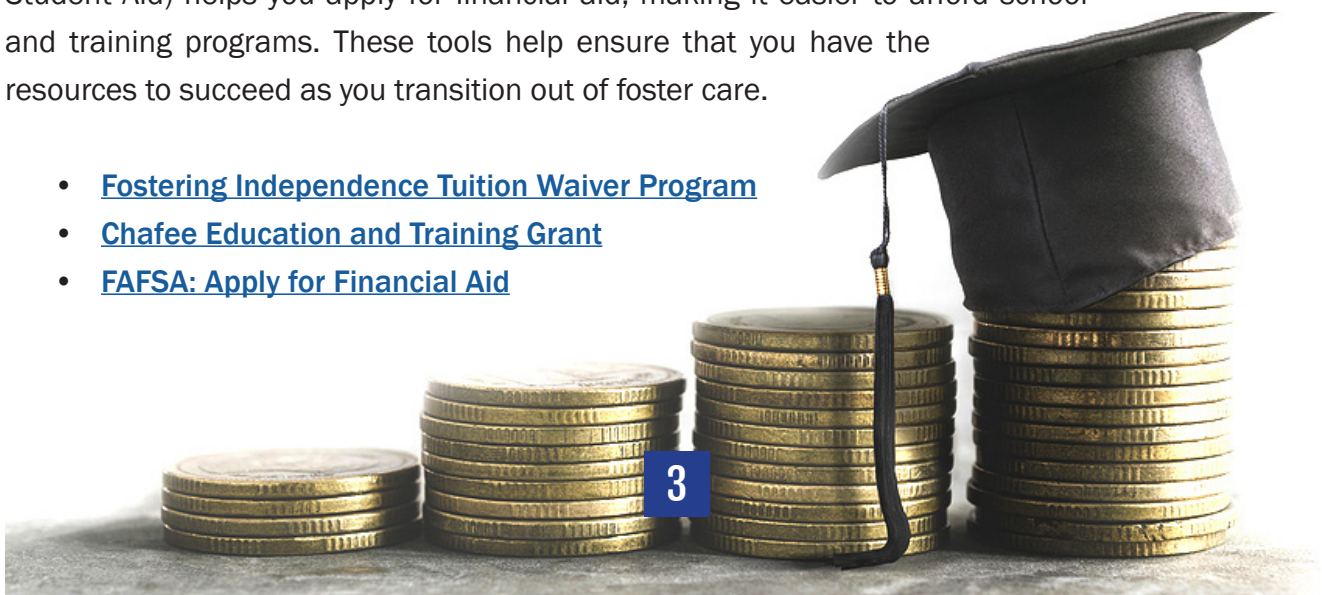
Checklist:

- **ID:** Birth certificate, Social Security card
 - **Medical:** Insurance info, immunization records
 - **Education:** Diploma or GED, transcripts
 - **Employment:** Resume, job offers
 - **Housing:** Lease, utility info
 - **Legal:** Court documents, power of attorney
 - **Support:** Caseworker contact, trusted friends, family
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- [Identification Resources for Youth](#)

Education

Education is vital for youth leaving foster care because it gives you the knowledge and skills to succeed both in school and later in life. It helps you understand your right to education, how to get your school records, and access support like tutoring if needed. Education opens doors to better job opportunities and helps you build a stable, independent future. Programs like the Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program can help pay for college or other training, and the Chafee Education & Training Grant provides additional financial support for your education. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) helps you apply for financial aid, making it easier to afford school and training programs. These tools help ensure that you have the resources to succeed as you transition out of foster care.

- [Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program](#)
- [Chafee Education and Training Grant](#)
- [FAFSA: Apply for Financial Aid](#)



Housing and Living Arrangements

Exploring housing options, applying for housing assistance, and effectively managing a household are crucial skills for youth transitioning to independence. Understanding the various types of housing available, navigating the application process for assistance, and learning practical strategies for household management can empower young individuals to create stable and supportive living environments.



- [Aging Out Housing Resources](#)
- [Move-In Checklist for Youth](#)
- [Common Rental Terms You Need to Know](#)
- [Apartment Walkthrough Checklist](#)

Prevention and Wellness Resources

Accessing mental health resources is vital for your well-being as you transition out of foster care. These resources provide the support and tools necessary to thrive. Available options include counseling services and coping strategies such as resources on making healthy choices and addressing mental health needs in youth and young adults. Additionally, these resources equip you to advocate for your own healthcare, understand your patient rights, and connect with vital support services like community health centers and STD testing facilities.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is essential because it provides immediate, confidential support for people in crisis, especially those thinking about suicide. It offers a safe space to talk, helps prevent suicide, and connects individuals to professional care. Available 24/7, it can be a lifeline during difficult times, providing both emotional support and resources for long-term help.

- [Prevention and Wellness Resources](#)
- [ACA Flyer for Youth](#)
- [Medicaid Resources in PA](#)
- [Foster Care SNAP Time Limit Exemption](#)

Financial Management

Learning to manage personal finances, create a budget, and understand credit and debt are essential skills for youth transitioning to independence. By gaining insight into effective budgeting techniques and the impact of credit on financial health, young individuals can make informed decisions that foster financial stability and long-term success.

- [Budgeting and Financial Planning](#)
- [Youth budgeting](#)

IL Aftercare Services

In Pennsylvania, Independent Living (IL) aftercare services help youth aging out of foster care by providing support to live independently. These services include life skills training (such as budgeting and cooking), financial assistance, help with finding housing, educational support, employment resources, and access to mental health and healthcare services. IL aftercare services are designed to ensure youth have the tools and resources needed to succeed and live on their own, until age 23. These services offer essential support to help youth navigate the challenges of transitioning to adulthood, promoting self-sufficiency and stability.

The “Common Stipend Brochure” supports this process by offering financial assistance to youth in IL aftercare, helping them cover living expenses as they transition to independence. This stipend can ease the financial burden, allowing youth to focus on important goals like education, employment, and securing stable housing. The brochure outlines how youth can access these stipends and other available resources, ensuring they have the financial support needed to thrive. Together with IL aftercare services, the use of stipends helps youth successfully transition out of the child welfare system and into a more stable, independent life.

- [Common Stipend Policy](#)

Legal and Advocacy Services

As youth exit care, it’s essential for them to understand the legal and advocacy services available to support their transition. These services help youth navigate their rights under the law, such as the right to a safe living environment, education, and privacy. If issues arise, such as a lack of support for education or housing, advocacy services can assist with many different processes, ensuring that concerns are addressed. Legal services also connect youth with supportive networks, including mentorship programs, financial aid resources, and job training opportunities. By engaging with these services, youth are empowered to advocate for themselves, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met as they move toward independence.

The “Know Your Rights” brochure plays a crucial role in this process by providing youth with the knowledge they need to navigate complex systems and stand up for their rights. It outlines important rights such as access to healthcare, protection from discrimination, and the ability to seek legal recourse if needed. Moreover, it directs youth to the legal and advocacy services that can guide them through challenges they may face. Whether it’s advocating for fair treatment in housing or education, or seeking legal representation, these resources ensure that youth leaving care are not alone and have the support they need to make informed decisions and transition successfully into adulthood.

- [Know Your Rights](#)

Building Social Connections

Building and maintaining strong relationships with friends, mentors, and community resources is vital for achieving permanence and stability. Developing these connections fosters a supportive network that can provide guidance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Engaging with mentors and community resources not only enhances personal growth but also helps youth navigate challenges, fostering resilience and a lasting sense of community. These social connections create a foundation for youth to feel secure and supported as they transition to adulthood, offering both emotional and practical assistance throughout their journey.

The “Permanency Pact” helps support this process by encouraging youth to establish long-term, meaningful relationships with trusted adults and community members. By formalizing these connections, the pact provides youth with a network of support that can offer stability and guidance as they move forward. This pact ensures that youth have reliable people to rely on, contributing to their overall sense of permanency and security as they transition to independence.

- [Permanency Pact](#)



Personal Development and Career Growth

Strategies for personal development, goal setting, and ongoing education or training are essential for self-discovery and growth. By exploring these strategies, individuals can identify their strengths and interests, set meaningful goals, and pursue opportunities for learning and skill-building. This process not only enhances their understanding of themselves but also equips them with the tools needed to navigate their future with confidence and purpose.

A valuable resource for supporting this growth is the Pennsylvania CareerLink Program. This statewide initiative helps youth and young adults build career readiness by offering job search assistance, resume writing, interview preparation, skills assessments, and access to training programs. For youth aging out of foster care, CareerLink also provides support in identifying educational and training opportunities, securing financial aid, and attending workshops to develop essential workplace skills. By connecting with Pennsylvania CareerLink, youth can access tailored support that aligns with their personal development goals, helping them build the skills and confidence necessary to pursue meaningful careers and successfully transition to independence.

- [Careerlink Skill Up](#)

