

**CHECKLIST FOR ATTORNEYS AD LITEM AND CASAS
PREPARING FOSTER YOUTH FOR POST FOSTER CARE LIFE**

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CHAPTER 2.2

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CHECKLIST FOR ATTORNEYS AD LITEM AND CASAS PREPARING FOSTER YOUTH FOR POST FOSTER CARE LIFE

I. INTRODUCTION

Updated versions of this [checklist](#) can be found at TexasFosterYouth.org in the *For Advocates* section. The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project (the Project), a special project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, provides free legal advice, assistance, guidance and representation to current and former foster youth throughout Texas to enforce foster youth rights and overcome barriers to a successful transition to independence. Besides providing representation to current and former foster youth, the Project serves as a free resource to youth and those who assist them, including attorneys ad litem, court appointed special advocates (CASAs), case workers and caring adults. The Project conducts training and outreach and maintains a website with numerous resources, which can be accessed at www.texasfosteryouth.org. The Project can be contacted toll-free at 877-313-3688 or by emailing info@texasfosteryouth.org.

Note: While the primary focus of this checklist is to prepare youth who will age out of the foster care system, it applies to every youth that enters the temporary or permanent managing conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family Services (DFPS). (DFPS is the Texas agency that protects children and adults who are elderly or have disabilities and regulates child care. Child Protective Services (CPS) is a DFPS program that protects children from abuse and neglect through investigations, services, foster care, and adoption. The names are often used interchangeably.) Even those youth who leave foster care for reunification, placement with kin, or adoption, as well as those youth in unstable home situations, will benefit from addressing these issues during their time in care. Too often the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project encounters youth who exited foster care before adulthood, or youth who should have been, but never were, placed in DFPS conservatorship, that have many of the same issues and concerns of aged out foster youth. DFPS policy supports resolving critical issues for youth before the court jurisdiction ends. [CPS Handbook §5541](#) (Issues to Resolve Before DFPS's Role in the Lawsuit Ends) is worthy of careful review to help identify issues that you should help your client resolve.

Links: This checklist includes numerous hyperlinks to connect you directly to sources of information helpful to current and former foster youth. Because links change, details are included to help you

track down the information if the links become less useful in the future. The main resource sites include:

- Child Protective Services (CPS) Handbook: www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS
- Texas Foster Youth Project: www.TexasFosterYouth.org

II. ALL AGES

A. Birth Certificate

You should always require DFPS to provide you with a copy of the youth's birth certificate. Review the information on the birth certificate carefully to ensure there are no errors. When a child enters foster care, DFPS is supposed to try to get the birth certificate from the family. If not provided by the family, DFPS is supposed to get a screen print of the birth record from the Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics, which can be used in lieu of a birth certificate until certain circumstances are met. If the child is born out of state or in a foreign country, the birth certificate should be ordered if not provided. [CPS Handbook §1520](#) (Obtaining Certified Birth Certificates and Screen-Printing Birth Records).

Check to verify there is a name, and that it is the same name and the same date of birth as listed on the court pleadings. If there are problems with the name, motions can be filed in the CPS court case to obtain orders for any necessary corrections or changes. If there is no birth certificate, it may be necessary for a delayed birth certificate to be sought, which is easier to do while the parents are still involved in the case.

B. Citizenship and Immigration Issues

Foreign-born children require a birth certificate, all available immigration/citizenship documents, and a review of their immigration status by an attorney with immigration expertise so that timely steps can be taken to obtain appropriate immigration relief, including petitioning for special immigrant juvenile status and obtaining a certificate of citizenship. Some foreign-born children acquire citizenship under certain conditions when they are adopted or have a U.S. citizen parent. However, the law is complicated and it should not be assumed that any foreign-born child is a citizen or that they have the necessary documents that prove they are a citizen. If the birth certificate is issued by a U.S. state but shows child was born in a foreign country, additional documentation is required to establish they are a U.S. citizen. You should insist on talking to the actual immigration expert and not settle for third-hand explanations from the caseworker; seek outside immigration expertise if necessary. [CPS Handbook §6700](#) (International and Immigration Issues).

C. Sibling Access

Is the youth having regular calls and visits with siblings who are not in the same placement?

D. Education

[Talking to Foster Youth About School](#), in the *Education* section of [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) under *For Youth* contains guidance on talking to youth of various ages about their educational experience and can help to assess whether the youth's educational needs and goals are being met. It also helps identify what steps and resources are needed to remedy deficiencies, and help foster youth maximize their educational experience. [Tex. Fam. Code 107.004\(d-2\)](#) and [Tex. Fam. Code 107.002\(i\)](#). Remember to focus not only on current grades and test scores but also, on future plans; it is never too early to introduce youth to the importance of developing their skills so that they can pursue higher education and career goals.

Except for those who reunify with a parent, youth who spend time in foster care will have access to the [tuition waiver](#) to cover tuition and fees at any Texas public college. Those youth who leave permanent managing conservatorship at the age of 14 or older to the legal responsibility of a parent, or leave temporary managing conservatorship at the age of 16 or older, also qualify for the [tuition waiver](#). [Foster Care and Student Success](#), found on [www.tea.state.tx.us](#), is a helpful resource on foster youth and education, and [CPS Handbook §15000](#) (Education for Children) outlines DFPS education policy and practices for foster youth. Other resources can be found in the *Education* section of [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) under *For Youth*.

The CPS [Regional Education Specialists](#) can be of great assistance in addressing education matters—seek to work directly with them as needed. [CPS Handbook §15610](#) (Role and Responsibilities of the Regional Education Specialist). Each school district should have a [Foster Care Liaison](#) who also can assist with school-related issues. The district's liaison should be listed on Texas Education Agency (TEA) [website](#); if not, call the district's central office for the contact information. Do not hesitate to enlist the aid of these individuals.

Foster youth have the right to continue attending the school they are enrolled in at the time they enter foster care or when they change placements, regardless of whether they move outside of attendance zones or district lines. They can stay in the school of origin until they complete the highest grade at that school unless the school district and CPS determine it not in the child's best interest. Under the [Every Students Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), school districts must assist in providing transportation. TEA guidance on the implementation of ESSA can be found in the [Foster Care Student Success](#) section of the [TEA](#) website. Texas law also provides foster youth the right to stay in the school of origin

through the highest grade level of the school, even if the student leaves conservatorship. [Tex. Fam. Code 25.001\(g\),\(g-1\)](#).

E. Special Education

Is a child or youth (child may be as young as 3) with disabilities receiving the necessary special education and other related services that they are entitled to? The [Foster Care and Student Success](#) resource guide found on [www.tea.state.tx.us](#) includes a helpful overview of the special education needs of foster youth (see Chapter 12); additional information can be found at [CPS Handbook §15700-15722](#). Has the youth been evaluated on a timely basis for special education services? Is the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) being followed? Has an ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee) meeting been held within the last year to review the IEP? Is there a need to request an ARD to consider revising the IEP? Who is serving as the surrogate parent and are they appropriately involved in special education decisions? Are all the appropriate parties participating at ARDs? Is the student in the least restrictive environment (LRE)? Are the rules and limitations regarding removal of special education students from their educational placement due to disciplinary violations being followed? Is the student being reevaluated at least once every three years? These questions are especially critical when the youth changes placements and schools—there should be no delay in implementation of the IEP or evaluation for special education services.

F. Health

Review the youth's health care – are they up to date on medical and dental exams and immunizations? Is the youth receiving, or should the youth be receiving, counseling or therapy services and is it being consistently provided? Talk to the youth about their health, the medications they take, the doctors and therapists they see and what they think about their care. For youth taking medications, ask how the medicine makes them feel and whether they experience sleepiness, inability to concentrate, weight gain or loss, dizziness, and other negative side effects. [Tex. Fam. Code §107.003\(b\)](#) and [Tex. Fam. Code §107.002\(b-1\)](#).

G. Attending Court Hearings

[Tex. Fam. Code §263.302](#) mandates that children of all ages should attend permanency hearings (those during the Temporary Managing Conservatorship phase) unless specifically excused by the court. The court shall consult with children age four and older regarding their permanency plan. [Tex. Fam. Code §263.501\(f\)](#) mandates that children of all ages should attend placement review hearings (those during the Permanent Managing Conservatorship phase) unless

specifically excused by the court. The court shall consult with children age four and older regarding their permanency or transition plan. DFPS is required to send 10-day notice of placement review hearings to youth 10 years of age or older- [Tex. Fam. Code §263.0021\(b\)\(8\)](#). Discuss with the court options for youth participation in hearing—possibilities include full hearing participation, conference with judge in chambers, video conferencing and phone. [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) has more information on youth [attending court hearings](#) in the *Being in Foster Care* section under *CPS Case Court Hearings*. Also located there is the [Report to Court by Foster Youth](#), which is a helpful tool to use to prepare the youth for participating at the court hearing and to obtain information to present to the court should the youth not attend the hearing.

H. Place Youth with Disabilities on HCS Wait List

The Home and Community-Based Services (HCS) program provides a variety of services to people with disabilities who live with their family, in their own home, in a foster/companion care setting, or in a residence with no more than four people who also receive services. The program helps meet the person's needs so the person can maintain himself or herself in the community and have opportunities to participate as a citizen to the maximum extent possible. With the HCS program, youth will have access to support services upon reaching adulthood and the options for the youth, whether or not they age out of foster care, expand tremendously. HCS generally covers individuals with intellectual disabilities, but in certain cases those with other significant disabilities who are in nursing facility placement or imminent risk of nursing facility placement may qualify. Wait lists are years long so a youth should be immediately registered for the wait list with the Department of Aging and Disability Services. To register, contact the [local intellectual and developmental disability authority](#), which you can find at www.dads.state.tx.us/contact/la.cfm. Check annually to verify the youth is still on the list and their position.

I. Review [Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care](#)

Discuss the list of rights with youth in an age appropriate manner, identify any areas of concern and address with placement, CPS and court. Small things can matter greatly to foster youth and they quickly add up to feelings of stigmatization. [Tex. Fam. Code §263.008](#).

III. AGE 7

A. Participation in Permanency Conference

Beginning at age 7 every youth in temporary managing conservatorship should be notified by DFPS of the conference and should be able to participate. [Tex.](#)

[Fam. Code §263.009](#) and [CPS Handbook §6251.3](#) (Written Notice of a Permanency Planning Meeting). If DFPS determines that the youth should not participate to protect the youth from a parent or upsetting details, insist on alternate meeting with all but the parent so the youth can be a full participant.

IV. AGE 11

A. Discuss “Criminal Matters”

At this age, begin talking to the youth and their placement about whether there have been “tickets.” This includes: juvenile, municipal, or justice of the peace court referrals or police interaction for fighting, curfew violations, truancy, disruptive behavior and other incidents, including those at school. Verify that the matter was resolved through dismissal, payment of fine or community service. Be especially vigilant for youth who are moved frequently due to behavioral issues or entered foster care during a turbulent time in their life. Notices often do not reach the transplanted youth or their caseworker. To that end, “Failure to Appear” for unresolved matters can lead to warrants and increased fines for these youth years later when they enter adulthood.

V. AGE 14

A. Experiential Living Skills

Foster youth ages 14 and older should receive training from their foster parent/facility on independent living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, use of public transportation (when appropriate), financial literacy, laundry and basic household tasks. [Tex. Fam. Code §264.121\(a-1\)](#) and [CPS Handbook §10111](#) (Experiential Life Skills Training for Youth Age 14 and Older).

B. Education

Once a youth is 14, besides the [Education](#) matters listed in the [All Ages](#) section of this checklist, monitor the student's progress in obtaining credits for high school graduation and ensure that they access the various supports available for foster youth to stay on track to graduate. Students who are behind or need additional support qualify for free summer school, credit recovery, tutoring, and State Virtual School. [Tex. Educ. Code §25.007](#). Even if a youth has not reached high school, accessing resources is important to put them on track to an age appropriate educational environment.

Early on, you should be helping youth address any credit barriers to graduation resulting from school transfers. Credit recovery and summer school are both options for obtaining needed credits. If a youth transfers high schools due to placement changes mid-semester, the new school should have procedures to award partial credit for course work, including electives. [Tex. Educ.](#)

[Code §25.007 \(b\) \(3\)](#). Foster youth and homeless students who change school districts in 11th or 12th grade can graduate based on the requirements of the school district they move from if they do not meet the requirements of their new district under [Tex. Educ. Code §28.005\(i\)](#). Work with the youth's academic counselor, [Regional Education Specialist](#) and [Foster Care Liaison](#) to develop an academic plan with the youth. While educational stability is critical at any age, it is particularly important during high school years and should be an important factor in the timing of placement changes.

Many provisions related to educational resources for foster youth also apply to homeless students.

C. Attend Permanency Planning Meetings

Youth age 14 and older are not only permitted to attend permanency planning meetings, but they should be strongly encouraged to attend and efforts should be made to accommodate the youth's schedule. [Tex. Fam. Code §263.009](#) and [CPS Handbook §6251.3](#) (Written Notice of a Permanency Planning Meeting).

D. Credit Report

Beginning at age 14, DFPS is required to obtain a copy of a credit report annually for the foster youth. The report is to be reviewed with the youth and they should receive information about how to correct it (if they find errors) and assistance in correcting it, if necessary. Once the youth turns 18, DFPS must assist young adults in obtaining their credit reports. [CPS Handbook §10620-23](#) (Consumer Credit Reports) and [Social Security Act, Section 475\(5\)\(D\)](#) (42 U.S.C. §675).

E. Transition Planning and Transition Plan

All foster youth who are 14 and older and removed from the home must have a youth-driven transition plan. Transition plans are created either in a Circle of Support or a transition plan meeting. [CPS Handbook §1121.23-24](#) (Circle of Support, Transition Plan Meeting). The plan must address the issues that are important for the youth as he or she leaves care and enters the adult world. Casework efforts and plan of service should be directed to helping the youth develop his or her transition plan. [CPS Handbook §6252](#) (Permanency Planning Meetings for Youth 14 and Over). Any youth who takes prescription medication must have provisions in their transition plan regarding managing the use of their medication and also, the managing of their long-term physical and mental health needs after leaving foster care. [Tex. Fam. Code §264.121\(g\)](#). A transition plan should be specific about what needs to be done and who is going to be doing it. There should be meaningful progress made as the youth progresses toward 18 in accomplishing the tasks, particularly those that others

are supposed to be doing for the youth or assisting the youth in doing.

F. Circle of Support

A [Circle of Support](#) is a meeting driven by the youth and is the preferred method of transition planning. State law encourages CPS to use it. [Tex. Fam. Code §264.121\(a\)](#). A Circle of Support is based on a CPS process called Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM)—a collaborative approach to service planning and decision making. The first Circle of Support should be held when the youth is 14 years old, and there should be subsequent meetings on at least an annual basis. [CPS Handbook §1121](#) (Family Group Decision-Making) and [CPS Handbook §6252](#) (Permanency Planning Meetings for Youth 14 and Over). The youth invites foster care providers, teachers, parents, siblings, relatives, church members, mentors, attorneys, CASAs and friends. A CPS Family Conference facilitator helps lead the group to aid the youth in developing a transition plan. Meeting topics include the youth's hopes and dreams, goals, strengths, concerns and needs for education, employment, health/mental health, housing, personal and community.

Youth should participate in planning the circle of support. The meeting should be planned well in advance so that the youth is informed of the wide range of persons that they can invite, has time to think about whom they want to invite and so that those invited have time to make plans to attend. The youth also has a right to exclude someone from participating, including their attorney. Youth should know in advance the topics of conversation so they have time to give these matters thought. Unfortunately, Circles of Support sometimes are not planned well in advance and the necessary participants are not included. Sometimes there is inadequate follow-up following the Circle of Support. Insist that the Circles of Support not be a last-minute affair and that staff make it a meaningful meeting for the youth and that follow-up is done, particularly regarding tasks assigned to DFPS staff. Request an additional Circle of Support if the initial Circle of Support was not effective or the youth's situation changes dramatically, which is especially likely to happen if the youth stays in extended foster care.

VI. AGE 15

A. Name Change

Explore whether youth might want, or need, a name change. Are there any problems with names on identification documents, records, etc.? Are there concerns about their name, such as bearing the last name of a failed adoption, or unhappy ties to abusive biological family? If a name change is requested, you should discuss the permanency of a legal name change and revisit the topic after the youth has had a few days

to think about it. It is important to address a name change before identification documents are obtained for the youth by their 16th birthday.

B. Identification Documents

See [Identification Documents](#) in [Age 16](#) section of this checklist. If the youth does not have their original documents, remind CPS (and the court) of the requirement for youth to have all of them by the time they turn 16.

C. Family Contact and Post-Foster Care Plans

As a youth begins developing plans for their post-foster care life, it is important to discuss with them any plans or dreams that involve biological family, friends and others from their past and present life that they envision having a significant role. Efforts should begin to track down these people and assess whether the youth can possibly have some contact with them and try to develop the relationship. Most youth will end up in contact with and, quite possibly, living with these people post-foster care and it is better to help the youth explore that relationship while it is still easy to backtrack and pursue other options.

D. Guardianship

A youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities has specialized needs in order to transition to adulthood. By the time a youth with disabilities turns 16, the caseworker must consider whether the youth will have the ability to provide for his or her own food, clothing, shelter, oversee his or her own health care, and manage his or her own financial affairs. Not every youth with these disabilities requires a full guardianship, which is very restrictive and removes the legal rights held by adults. Courts are required to ensure that the least restrictive arrangement is made—sometimes the least restrictive plan is a [supported decision-making agreement](#) or a limited guardianship, rather than a full guardianship.

The caseworker should consult the DFPS [Developmental Disability Specialist](#). The caseworker must consider family and friends as options for a guardian before making a referral to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) for a guardianship. Because this process can require obtaining additional evaluations, SSI and time to explore options, it should begin well before the youth's 16th birthday and be monitored closely in the coming years. Communicate directly with the Developmental Disability Specialist to assess progress. [CPS Handbook §10340 - 10344](#) (Preparation for Long-Term Care or Support in Adulthood for Youth with Disabilities).

E. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Any youth with significant disabilities that will limit their ability to obtain and maintain employment will need SSI upon aging out of foster care, even if the youth will not need a legal guardian. For youth needing long-term care resources, SSI is generally required to access resources. While DFPS policy is to contact the SSI coordinator once the youth turns 17, this is much too late in the process for appropriate transition planning for youth with disabilities. [CPS Handbook § 1574](#) (SSI Applications for Youth Aging Out of Care). It also can easily cause a youth to turn 18 with an SSI application that is still being considered by the Social Security Administration.

Often there is confusion as to whether a youth is receiving SSI. Many foster youth receive Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI), which is another source of Social Security funds. This is based on one of their parents being deceased, disabled or retired. Even if a parent's rights have been terminated, their child is still entitled to RSDI benefits based on the parent's Social Security credits and status. RSDI will end when the youth turns 18, unless they are still in high school, in which case benefits will end once they turn 19, graduate from or leave high school, whichever comes first. If the youth is disabled, DFPS must apply for SSI (and for continued RSDI) for them. RSDI can be continued for a disabled youth who establishes disability with the Social Security Administration, but this does not automatically happen. It is not uncommon for some to think a disabled youth has SSI because they are receiving RSDI benefits. Accordingly, written confirmation of benefits from the Social Security Administration with review by someone experienced in public benefits law is necessary for youth to have what they need upon leaving CPS care.

If it is determined by the SSI coordinator that the youth is not receiving SSI, or is only receiving RSDI, the SSI coordinator must apply for SSI benefits for the youth and continued RSDI. Because extensive documentation of the disabilities must be provided and because the support provided by the SSI coordinator in completing the necessary applications and gathering documentation is minimal, it is critical to monitor the progress closely to ensure that the process is moving forward and that the process is not being delegated primarily to the foster parent and youth. Insist on copies of filed applications and obtaining on a regular basis specific details of what has been completed, what is still needed and who is responsible. [CPS Handbook §10341.2](#) (Ensuring Funding and Eligibility for Services).

VII. AGE 16

A. Identification Documents

By age 16 every foster youth should have the following original, certified documents: birth certificate, Texas State identification card or driver's license, Social Security card, and, if born in a foreign country, original immigration documents, such as LPR card or certificate of citizenship. CPS is mandated to provide the documents to the youth when they turn 18 or leave foster care and also give the youth their immunization records and Medicaid card. [Tex. Fam. Code §264.121\(e\)\(e-1\)\(e-2\)](#) and [CPS Handbook §10130 - 10132](#) (Personal Documents Provided to Youth). If CPS fails to obtain the documents for the youth before they turn 18, they are still responsible for doing so.

Inspect the actual documents, not photo copies, to make sure there is an actual original available. Check for name consistency and correctness. The documents will be useless if they are under different names or have conflicting information—the young adult's life will be on hold for months or years until it is corrected, making it impossible to obtain employment and housing. Make an electronic copy and/or photo copy of the front and back of every document and store in a safe, secure, permanent location so it can be accessed if the youth needs information in future years to obtain replacements. (CPS often fails to keep copies of these documents or is unable to locate them and it can be very difficult to track down the necessary information to obtain replacements.)

Documents should be securely stored at youth's placement for use for employment, college enrollment and other matters. Youth should have Texas identification card or driver's license available for them to carry on a daily basis. When the youth changes placements, verify documents have gone with the youth. Review with the youth how to secure documents, have appropriate documents when needed, the necessity of identification documents to function in adult world (job, apartment, enrolling in college, financial aid, public benefits, etc.) and difficulties in replacing lost documents.

Detailed information about obtaining various documents can be found at [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) section under *For Youth* in the *Identification Documents and CPS Records* section.

B. Education

Once a youth is 14, besides the [Education](#) matters listed in the [All Ages](#) and [Age 14](#) section of this checklist, make sure struggling or disenfranchised youth are supported in accessing alternative educational programs. GED options are limited for foster youth under 18, but many districts have nontraditional campuses and programs.

If a youth is struggling to graduate because of placement changes during 11th or 12th grade and not meeting the graduation requirements of their new school, they may still be eligible to graduate based on former school's requirements. [Texas Education Code 25.002\(i\)](#).

The DFPS [Regional Education Specialist](#) can be of great assistance in addressing education matters; seek to work directly with them as needed. [CPS Handbook §15610](#) (Role and Responsibilities of the Regional Education Specialist).

C. Medical Consent

Youth who are 16 or 17 can request that the court authorize them to be their own medical consenter. [Tex. Fam. Code §266.010](#) and [CPS Handbook §11140](#) (Medical Consent by Minor Youth). An Attorney Ad Litem must advise the client of this right and file a petition requesting authorization if the youth wants to ask the court to be the consenter. [Tex. Fam. Code §107.003\(b\)\(3\)](#) and [Tex. Fam. Code §266.010](#). When a youth is the medical consenter, they must complete the standard DFPS medical consent training for caregivers and if they are taking or considering psychotropic medications, the Psychotropic Medication Training. [Medical Consent - A Guide to Medical Services at CPS](#) and [CPS Handbook §11140](#) (Medical Consent by Minor Youth). Suggest to the youth that they complete the training before the court hears the request to help establish their capacity.

Even if a youth is not interested in being named the medical consenter or is not authorized by court, youth should be well informed about what medications they take and familiar with any health conditions they may have. Make sure their plan of service includes provisions for training concerning their medication and self-administration of that medication. Their transition plan should also have provisions regarding managing the use of the medication and managing the youth's long-term physical and mental health needs after leaving foster care. [Tex. Fam. Code §264.121\(g\)](#).

D. Citizenship and Immigration Issues

See the [Citizenship and Immigration Issues](#) in the [All Ages](#) section of this checklist. If a foreign-born youth does not have actual certified documents issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that show they are a legal immigrant or citizen, it is of the utmost importance that the process to obtain status/documents is well underway. Do not just take assurances that it is being worked on, ask to see the actual filed application and for the contact information of the person responsible for filing the application.

E. Life Skills Class

Every youth should attend the Life Skills (often called PAL) class during their 16th year. There should be approximately 30 hours of classwork completed. If youth is over 16½ and has not been scheduled for a class or has been unable to complete the class, contact the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff in the youth's home region and region of placement. State PAL staff can be contacted if necessary. [CPS Handbook §10222](#) (Life Skills Training) and [DFPS Preparation for Adult Living Staff](#). The class teaches critical independent living skills and completion of the class is required to access the \$1000 Transitional Living Allowance when the youth ages out of foster care.

F. Transition Center

If the youth lives in an area where there is a transition center, be sure they visit the center and have the opportunity to become familiar with and access their resources. [CPS Handbook §10140](#) (Transition Centers for Youth) and the [Texas Youth Connection](#) website under Contacts. Transition centers offers a range of support and services to current and aged out foster youth including help with job search, summer employment, job training, college financial aid applications, housing, mentoring and pursuing higher education.

G. Higher Education Benefits

Youth, even if still in high school, can use their [tuition waiver](#) and [Education and Training Voucher](#) (ETV) funds to cover the expenses of college classes and dual credit classes. ETV funds can be used to pay for supplies such as text books and a laptop for these classes. Youth still in foster care or extended foster care should seek the assistance of their Preparation for Adult worker in obtaining the necessary support to correctly apply for financial aid and access benefits. Incorrect answers on the FAFSA and difficulties completing the ETV application and obtaining the required documentation can interfere with receiving needed ETV and financial aid funds.

VIII. AGE 17

A. A Guide to “Aging Out” of Foster Care in Texas

If your client has not yet received this book, order a copy from the [Texas Foster Youth Justice Project](#). It is also available online.

B. Extended Foster Care

Review with youth the options for extended foster care and assist in exploring supervised independent living or other options more appropriate for young adults. Make sure youth has opportunity to sign extended foster care agreement. Discuss options to

return to foster care after leaving but possible limitations on available placements. Review that the transition to independence goes more smoothly when youth notifies CPS well in advance of plans to leave care so CPS and Preparation for Adult Living Staff can coordinate necessary transition tasks. [CPS Handbook §5612](#) (Actions Required by the Caseworker for All Youth Aging Out of DFPS Conservatorship) and [CPS Handbook §10490](#) (Discharge From Extended Foster Care).

C. Tuition Waiver

Youths' Preparation for Adult Living worker should provide them with their [tuition waiver](#) letter so they will have it for applying for college and financial aid. Multiple copies of the letter should be made, including electronic copies. Some copies should be stored with the youth's identification documents.

D. Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Worker

Every youth should have an assigned PAL worker. Make sure the youth knows who their worker is and their contact information and have them contact the worker to discuss their plans for the future and any current needs for assistance with transitional services and planning. You can contact the [PAL Lead](#) for your region to find out who the worker is.

E. Review Benefits for Current and Former Foster Youth

Review the benefits and services available. While this should be covered in the youth's Life Skills class and in transition planning, the information can be overwhelming and youth need an opportunity to process it and ask questions. DFPS' [Benefits for Current and Aged out Foster Youth](#), found at [TexasFosteryouth.Org](#) under *For Youth* in the *Aging Out* section is a good document to use for the review.

F. SSI Payee

If a youth has mental health or intellectual or developmental disabilities that will prevent them from handling their SSI payments, but they do not meet the criteria for a guardianship and are not entering a long-term care program that will help manage their SSI funds, they will need a payee. Often the Social Security Administration will require that they have a payee. Biological family is generally not good option for payee. Identify local resources that may be able to act as payee or other appropriate individuals so the young adult does not default to their biological family.

IX. AGE 18

A. Selective Service Registration

Within 30 days of their 18th birthday, males must register for the selective service. Failure to register

makes someone ineligible for a wide range of federal benefits, including financial aid and job training. Males who don't register at all before they turn 26 will not be able to register and will likely encounter problems for decades to come. Registering online at sss.gov is easy (Social Security number required) and you can also verify registration at the site.

B. Register to Vote

While not mandatory, encouraging U.S. citizen clients to vote helps the young adult become familiar with how to register and gives them an additional document that can support identification. [Secretary of State Voter Registration Site](#).

C. Financial Information

Every foster youth who is 18 should be provided information in writing about any trust funds, Social Security benefits and bank accounts, regardless of whether exiting foster care or not.

D. Education Portfolio

If a youth exits foster care, they should be provided with their Education Portfolio. If they stay in extended foster care, depending on the structure of the placement they should either be given it or have access to it. [CPS Handbook §15423](#) (Delivering the Education Portfolio at Discharge from Conservatorship).

E. File Request for Court to Extend Jurisdiction until Age 21

Once a youth is 18, they can request that the Court extend jurisdiction over them until they turn 21; this request can be filed whether they are in extended foster care or trial independence. With extended jurisdiction, even after a young adult has completed trial independence, they can request that the court hold service review hearings. This can be critical to resolving problems related to post-foster care transitional benefits and services or unresolved matters from their time in foster care, such as lack of identification documents, immigration assistance and sibling access. [Tex. Fam. Code §263.601-608](#) and [CPS Handbook §5600- 5651](#) (Extension of Court's Jurisdiction When a Youth Turns 18).

F. Health Passport and Medical Records

Once they are 18, a young adult should be able to access their Health Passport; Preparation for Adult Living staff, their caseworker, or aftercare caseworker should assist youth in doing so. The Health Passport will have information on immunization history, prescriptions filled and services received under the foster youth Medicaid and the post-foster Medicaid provided to young adults who age out of care until they

turn 21. Once they turn 21, the aged out former foster youth will be under different Medicaid insurance that does not use the Health Passport. The Health Passport should be printed out or stored as a pdf file so it is available for future access. It can also be obtained via a [CPS case record request](#) but that request can take a long time to be processed.

Youth should also receive copies of important medical records from their CPS file including immunizations, psychological reports, and reports or documents concerning past or current medical conditions. Ask for these documents to be provided to youth as soon as they turn 18 so a formal CPS record request won't be needed to obtain them later.

G. CPS Records

A young adult who was in foster care has a right to obtain their CPS records once they are 18. More information about filing a request for CPS records can be found in [Obtaining Your CPS Records](#) at [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) under *For Youth* in the *Identification Documents and CPS Records* section. In addition, [How an Attorney/ Immigration Representative can Request CPS records for Former Foster Youth](#) has information for legal advocates to request records for a client. This can be found at [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) under *For Advocates*. Records are supplied on a CD in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file. For many youth, the records are of tremendous importance and they will need information in the file as they navigate independence. Preparing a record request form and obtaining a court order with a deadline of 30 days to complete the request can help the young adult obtain their records much sooner than the usual 1-2 years.

X. TRIAL INDEPENDENCE

A. Medicaid

When a foster youth ages out of foster care after turning 18, they are eligible for Former Foster Care Children's Medicaid coverage until they turn 26. DFPS is responsible for initially certifying the young adult when they leave care. The process of obtaining and maintaining coverage does not always go smoothly. [Free Health Insurance \(Medicaid\) for Aged Out Foster Youth Ages 18-25](#) found at [TexasFosterYouth.org](#) under the *Health Insurance/Medical* section has detailed information about the program including how to call 2-1-1 and talk to a Medicaid Foster Youth Specialist. Impress on aging out youth that they must keep their contact information up to date in order to receive renewal notices and that they must respond to any requests for needed information or call for guidance about how to respond if they find notices confusing. The [Texas Foster Youth Justice Project](#) has engaged in extensive advocacy with the Medicaid program to

address issues and is available to assist with access issues.

B. Aftercare Case Management and Other Post Foster Care Benefits

When a young adult leaves foster care there are benefits and support services they can access. The young adult should contact their assigned Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) worker. If they don't know their PAL worker or have difficulties contacting them they can contact the lead PAL staff for the region where they live, the lead PAL Staff for the region where their foster care case originated and the State PAL staff. [DFPS Preparation for Adult Living Staff](#). PAL workers can help with some benefits and refer youth to aftercare case management services in the area where they live for other services. It is up to the young adult how much they wish to utilize these services and benefits. If a youth is encountering barriers in accessing benefits and services, they can request a court service review hearing during trial independence or if they have requested extended jurisdiction. [CPS Handbook §5640-5641](#) (Court Jurisdiction and Reviews for Young Adults Who Continue to Receive Transitional Living Services During or After the Trial Independence Period).



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TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES PROVIDE A MULTIPURPOSE, SYSTEMIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS TO HELP IN TRANSITIONING TO A SUCCESSFUL ADULTHOOD THROUGH COORDINATED PERMANENCY AND TRANSITION PLANNING. THE PROVISION OF **TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES** INCLUDES ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT BENEFITS, SUPPORTS, AND RESOURCES THAT AFFECT BOTH OLDER YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AND THOSE WHO HAVE AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE. **TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES** APPLY TO YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT'S AGES 14 UP TO AGE 23 (DEPENDING ON THE PROGRAM) AND UP TO AGE 26 FOR CONTINUOUS HEALTHCARE COVERAGE.

Experiential Life Skills Training

Foster parents and other providers are required to train youth age **14** and older in life skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, nutrition education and cooking, use of public transportation when appropriate, financial literacy training to include money management, credit history, balancing a checkbook and performing basic household tasks. If a youth has a source of income the provider will assist in establishing a savings account for the youth. In addition, foster parents and providers must connect youth and young adults to community resources such post-secondary education; employment; and vocational/technical school opportunities. These life skills activities provided by the caregiver along with the receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's plan of service and transition plan. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10111

ACCESS Granted-Texas Foster Care Handbook

This handbook helps children and youth in foster care to better understand how the foster care system works and to address many of the questions and concerns they have regarding foster care. It provides information in an understandable manner on topics such as the CPS chain of command, the rights of children/youth while in foster care, health passport, the education portfolio, transition plans and Transitional Living Services. *Updates are underway to reflect recent legislative and policy changes.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6300.asp#CPS_6315_1

Transition Planning/Permanency Planning for Older Youth

By participating in permanency planning meetings such as Permanency Conferences, Circles of Support or Transition Plan Meetings youth help in the development of a transition plan. The transition plan identifies services for each youth to accomplish goals to assist them in obtaining positive permanency or to transition successfully from foster care. The plan is attached to the youth's **plan of service** to ensure consistency of services. Identifying caring adults for youth and involving them in transition planning help to ensure personal and community connections are incorporated into the transition planning process. Transition planning continues to be conducted for those young adults in the Extended Foster Care program.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6270.asp#CPS_6273

Circle of Support (COS)

A COS is a youth driven process beginning at **16** years of age (or as early as age **14** in some cases) and may take the place of the required permanency planning meetings as a means of developing a transition plan. The COS is facilitated by the family conference specialist. The COS is coordinated with participants that a youth identifies as "caring adults" who make up their support system. COS participants can include a youth's birth family members, foster care providers, teachers, church members, a mentor and so on. Participants meet to develop and review the youth's permanency and transition plan, identify strengths, goals and needs in the areas of permanency, education, employment, health/mental health needs, housing, and PAL life skills training components. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6270.asp#CPS_6274_1

OTHER INFORMATION-Under 18:

FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN-(1-844-286-0769) This is an HHSC position that will investigate complaints and possible rights violations of children and youth in foster care under age 18. The Ombudsman ensures that youth understand their rights while in foster care; reviews a youth's concerns about case specific questions and



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complaints; and with a youth's permission work with other people to improve their care. Complaints are kept confidential without threat of retaliation. <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/ombudsman/foster-care.shtml>

Medical Consent

A youth in foster care who is at least **16** years old may consent to receiving medical care if the court with continuing jurisdiction determines that the youth has the capacity to consent to medical care. Caregivers are required to advise youth of their right to request to become their own medical consenters.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x11000.asp#CPS_11140

Driver License Fee Waiver

Driver license fees are waived for youth in DFPS temporary or permanent managing conservatorship and for young adults at least **18** years of age, but younger than age **21**, who reside in a DFPS **paid** foster care placement. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10600.asp#CPS_10642

Credit Reports

Every youth in the conservatorship of DFPS age **14** up to age **18** are informed that a credit report is run annually, until discharged from DFPS care. In addition to ensuring that the youth is notified that a report was run, the caseworker will explain the credit report and the importance of maintaining good credit. A young adult in Extended Foster care requests their own report at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10600.asp#CPS_10620

Provision of Personal Documents/Records-Ages 16 and 18

Age **16**-Youth in DFPS conservatorship on or before they turn age 16 must be provided with a copy or original document of a:

- birth certificate; and
- Social Security card or replacement Social Security card, as appropriate; and
- Personal identification certificate/card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Age **18**-Young Adults who age out DFPS foster care will receive either a copy or original personal documents (if not already provided) and other information. These include:

- A birth certificate;
- A Social Security card or a replacement Social Security card;
- A personal state identification certificate/card issued by DPS;
- Immunization records;
- Information contained in the youth's health passport;
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate;
- Medical Power of Attorney Information-Forms 2559 A and B
- *Almost 18 Letter*; and
- Youth Transition Portfolio

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10130

A young adult may requests copies of these documents and other personal CPS records from *DFPS Records Management*. Information on how to make record requests is at: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/legal/personal_docs.asp

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES/PROGRAMS

Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program

The PAL program assists older youth in foster care prepare for their departure and transition to a successful adulthood. Supportive services and benefits are provided by PAL Staff or PAL Contract Providers to eligible young adults up to age **21** to become self-sufficient and productive. PAL is funded by the *federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*, State general revenue funds and/or community match (20%).

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10200.asp#CPS_10200



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PAL services include:

- **Life skills assessment** (Casey Life Skills Assessment) to assess strength and needs in life skills attainment www.caseylifeskills.org (assessments are conducted before Life skills training):
- **Life skills training** (age **16 to 18**) in the following core areas:
 - Health and Safety;
 - Housing and Transportation;
 - Job Readiness;
 - Financial Management;
 - Life Decisions/Responsibility;
 - Personal/Social Relationships
 - Educational/vocational services
- **Supportive services** (based on need and funding availability) may include:
 - graduation items,
 - counseling,
 - tutoring,
 - driver's education fees, or
 - mentoring.
- A **transitional living allowance** of up to \$1,000 is distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who participated in PAL training, to help with initial start-up costs in adult living.
- **Aftercare room and board assistance** (ages 18-21) is based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult).
- **Case management** to help young adults with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

***Contact Regional PAL Staff for more information about all Transitional Living Services at:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp

Extended Foster Care Program

With the implementation of the federal **Fostering Connections Act** (*Title IV-E of the Social Security Act*), a young adult who ages out of foster care at age 18 is eligible for Extended Foster Care provided there is an available placement, the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets at least one of the following conditions:

18 up to 22 year olds, and:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is

18 up to 21 years old and;

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

For more information about Extended Foster Care Go to:

[HTTP://WWW.DFPS.STATE.TX.US/HANDBOOKS/CPS/FILES/CPS_PG_X10400.ASP#CPS_10400](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/cps/files/cps_pg_x10400.asp#CPS_10400)

[HTTP://WWW.DFPS.STATE.TX.US/CHILD_PROTECTION/FOSTERING_CONNECTIONS/EXTENDED_FOSTERCARE.ASP](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/fostering_connections/extended_fostercare.asp)

Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Program

The SIL program is a component of the Extended Foster Care program and allows young adults to live independently under a minimally supervised living arrangement provided by a DFPS contracted provider. A young adult in SIL is not supervised 24-hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities, such as managing their own finances, buying groceries/personal items, and working with a landlord. Living arrangements may



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include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings. Individuals are assisted in transitioning to independent living, achieving identified education and employment goals, accessing community resources, engaging in needed life skills trainings, and establishing important relationships. Young adults must apply for and be accepted into the SIL program.

For more information about SIL go to:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10440.asp#CPS_10480

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Fostering_Connections/supervised_independent_living.asp

Return for the Extended Foster Care Program

Young adults who aged out of DFPS conservatorship may return at any time up until the age of 21 to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program if the required stipulations are met:

- Is offered an available placement;
- Understand that court jurisdiction will be extended, if the court permits;
- Sign or re-sign a Voluntary Extended Foster Care agreement; and
- Agrees to meet one of the criteria described in the Extended Foster Care program within 30 days of being placed.

PAL staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care and refer to the regional re-entry staff. **Regional Re-entry Staff Contact List** <http://intranet/CPS/Regional/re-entry.asp>

OTHER RELATED INFORMATION

Trial Independence Period (TI)

A young adult in DFPS conservatorship who turns 18 as well as a young adult enrolled in the Extended Foster Care Program may leave foster care for a "trial independence" period of 6 months (or up to 12 months with a court order). During the TI period, the young adult may be living independently and receiving other transitional living benefits such as PAL, ETV, and Texas Medicaid.

Extended Court Jurisdiction

Young adults that leave foster care at age 18 for a TI period will have court jurisdiction extended for 6 months. Additionally court jurisdiction may be extended for a 12 month TI period if ordered by the court. If a young adult is in Extended Foster Care, court jurisdiction will continue during this period but will not exceed the month of their 21st birthday. http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_5600.asp#CPS_5600

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INFORMATION

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

ETV is a *federally-funded (Chafee)* and state-administered program. Based on the cost of attendance as established by higher education, youth in foster care or other eligible youth and young adult's ages 16 up to the age of 23 may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance per year to help them reach their postsecondary education goals if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Have a high school diploma or GED or be exempt from required school attendance; or
- The student is enrolled in a dual-credit course or other course at an institution of higher education for which the student will earn a high school diploma and college credit.

Individuals eligible for ETV include:

- Youth in DFPS foster care who are at least **16** and likely to remain in care until **18**; or
- Youth who aged out of DFPS foster care but have not yet turned **21**; or
- Youth who were adopted from DFPS foster care after turning age **16** and are not yet **21**; or
- Youth who enter Permanency Care Assistance after age **16**; or
- Youth who are in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (formerly TJJC) and are in a Title IV-E placement when turning age **18**; or
- Tribal youth or young adults in tribal foster care; or



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- The above eligible students who move out of state to attend school and were originally enrolled in ETV in Texas.

ETV program participation requirements-Students must apply for and be approved for ETV before his or her 21st birthday, meet school enrollment requirements, and be enrolled in at least 6 semester hours in an *accredited or pre-accredited* public or private, non-profit program/institution that:

- provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or
- provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment; or
- has been in existence for two years and offers training programs to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than one year).

Students participating in the ETV Program on their 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23rd birthday as long as they are enrolled in ETV and meeting the satisfactory academic progress policies toward completing their postsecondary education or training program as determined by the institution. After age 21, the student must be continuously enrolled in the institution to remain eligible for the ETV program up to their 23rd birthday.

Students interested in specific educational programs through *Correspondence Courses, Distance Education Courses, or Continuing Education* courses must contact ETV staff for prior approval to ensure proper school accreditation and that courses lead to a degree or recognized certificate program. Courses must apply to a Student's academic degree or certificate program.

Note: Youth or young adults in DFPS **paid** foster care, enrolled in higher education and eligible for ETV may have certain expenses paid by the ETV program (ex., books, computers, child care, and transportation). ETV will not cover residential housing, personal items and food since this is provided for in the placement.
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10300.asp#CPS_10320

Apply for the ETV Program at: <http://www.texasetv.com> or call toll free 877-268-4063.

College Tuition and Fee Waiver

The college tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions from payment of tuition and fees at a Texas **state supported college or university** to individuals formerly in **Texas** state foster care and adopted youth. To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, youth or young adults must have been in DFPS conservatorship. Exemptions occur:

- the day before the student's 18th birthday;
- the day of the student's 14th birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights terminated) on or after that day;
- the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- if a youth was adopted and the adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009;
- if permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) of the youth was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009; or
- if a youth was returned to the legal responsibility of the parent at:
 - age 14 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's *permanent* managing conservatorship; or
 - age 16 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's *temporary* managing conservatorship; or
- when a student is enrolled in a dual credit course or other courses in which the student may earn joint high school and college credit and if tuition hasn't been waived. *Note: Youth enrolled in a dual credit course may enroll in the ETV program to have some education expenses covered.*

Youth or young adults must check with each school to ensure that the courses they are enrolling in are exempt from tuition and fees. Some vocational / certificate courses may not be exempt from tuition and fees. Young



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adults must be enrolled in a Texas state supported college or university **no later than his or hers 25th birthday.**

Adopted youth who are subject to an adoption assistance agreement that provides monthly stipends and Medicaid benefits are eligible for the college tuition and fee waiver. For these students there is no age limit to enroll in college in order to take advantage of the tuition and fee waiver. *These students must meet the required school GPA requirements and not complete credit hours considered to be excessive to continue to receive the tuition waiver exemption.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10300.asp#CPS_10311

Reference the *Texas Education Code*-Sec. 54.366 and 54.367 (2009) and Section 700.1630, Subchapter P of the Texas Administrative Code (2016).

DFPS College Scholarships:

Freshmen Success Fund for Foster Youth (est. April 2013)

This is a grant for first time college freshmen formerly in DFPS foster care. Each year there will be 4 one time grants of \$1,000 available for young adults enrolling in their freshmen year. These grants are to cover basic non-tuition related expenses such as books and supplies, computers and software, tools and uniforms and transportation. Students must be enrolled in a Texas state-supported college, university, or vocational/technical school that accepts the state college tuition and fee waiver.

C. Ed Davis-PAL Scholarship (est. July 2012)

This scholarship is for basic non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. Scholarships are for \$1,000 per academic year and are available to *sophomore, junior or senior* year students. More information about these scholarships is available at:

<https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/scholarships.asp>

College Resources for Foster Care Students

Temporary Housing Assistance between Academic Terms

Texas' institutes of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices.

College Foster Care Student Liaisons

As of January 2016 each state supported college/university has appointed a foster care student liaison to help foster care students in coordinating college readiness and student success. Liaisons can help students navigate the college system and connect them to resources needed to achieve higher education goals. A list of liaisons is located at: <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=429> under "Eligible Institutions".

Bacterial Meningitis Vaccine for Students Entering Post-Secondary Education

Students under age 30 entering a Texas institution of higher education must be vaccinated for bacterial meningitis. For DFPS foster youth, payments for doctor's visits and vaccination costs are covered by the **FFCC** Medicaid (STAR Health or STAR) program.

Texas Medicaid-Former Foster Youth (18-25) and OTHER HEALTHCARE INFORMATION

Former Foster Care Children (FFCC) Program

The **FFCC** program provides continuous healthcare coverage through age 25 to young adults who age out of Texas foster care and are receiving Medicaid when they aged out. This population will receive healthcare services in two separate programs based on age;



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- Young adults aged 18 through 20 will be enrolled in STAR Health but can switch to STAR upon request; and
- Young adults aged 21 through 25 will receive Medicaid through the STAR plan of their choice.

To be eligible for the FFCC program, the young adult must:

- Be age 18 through 25;
- Have been in Texas foster care on his or her 18th birthday or older;
- Be receiving Medicaid when he or she aged out of Texas foster care; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or be a qualified alien for example have an I-551 permanent resident card.

Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth (MTFCY)

Provides medical coverage to young adults age 18 through 20 who are not eligible for the FFCC program because they were not receiving Medicaid at the time they aged out of foster care. The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Be age 18 through 20 years of age;
- Have been in Texas foster care at age 18, or older;
- Have no other healthcare coverage;
- Meet program rules for income; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or have a qualified alien status.

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10150

Superior Healthplan-a2A CentAccount® Rewards Program (<https://www.fostercaretx.com>)

This program offers reward dollars of up to \$160 for members who complete wellness visits, dental check-ups and other health screenings for members ages 18 through 21 years old. Visit the Texas Youth Connection-HEALTH section for more information: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/health/healthcare.asp>

Your Texas Benefits

Young adults should be directed to use YourTexasBenefits.com including using the mobile app to manage their benefits at any time and place. The website and mobile app can be used to apply for and renew benefits and report changes such as an address update. STAR Member Helpful Numbers: **1-800-964-2777** or **1-866-912-6283**.

Health Passport

The Health Passport is a computer-based system that has health data about youth and young adults in the STAR Health program. The Health Passport is not a full medical record. It has information on doctor and dentist visits, hospital stays, prescriptions and shot records. If a young adult wants access to his or hers Health Passport visit www.fostercaretx.com. NOTE: Young adults must register for their Health Passport before exiting foster care by using his or hers Personal ID number that is available from the caseworker.

2-1-1 TEXAS

Young adults can call **2-1-1** to report any changes to an address, their case, check benefits, and request a Medicaid card. The young adults should identify as a "former foster youth" and notify the staff that they are calling about the **Former Foster Care Children** or **Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth** programs. Additionally, **2-1-1** may be contacted for non-medical issues such as applying for food stamps and family medical assistance. Information is at <https://www.211texas.org/211/>.

OTHER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT RESOURCES

Texas Youth Hotline is a resource for youth, parents, siblings and other family members who are in need of a caring voice and a listening ear. Individuals may contact the statewide hotline at **1-800-989-6884** for telephone counseling, information, and referrals or CHAT online or **TEXT 512-872-5777** for assistance. The hotline can help locate services available in local communities. More information is available at the [Texas Youth and Runaway Hotline](http://TexasYouthandRunawayHotline) website.



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Texas Youth Connection is a website designed with input from youth and young adults and is a resource for youth in the Texas foster care system, alumni of foster care, and stakeholders seeking general tips and information. This website offers information and resources about safety and well-being, education, finances/banking, records, healthcare, contacts, jobs, housing, Transition Center information, PAL contact information and other useful information. This website is also the location of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Youth Survey- www.texasyouthconnection.org

Texas Youth Connection-FACEBOOK PAGE is another source for youth and young adults to find current, relevant resources, information, and other trending topics beneficial to the youth and young adult's transition to adulthood. This page allows DFPS to stay connected with youth and young adults using a popular social media website. The page is located at www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection.

Statewide Youth Leadership Council (YLC) is comprised of two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) per region. The purpose of the statewide YLC is to provide a forum for youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care to address identified issues and concerns about experiences in the DFPS foster care system and to make recommendations about improving services to children and youth in foster care. Upon request by CPS, the YLC reviews state policies and programs and provides feedback.

Youth Specialists (alumni of foster care) are hired as full time or part time employees in each DFPS region, one is located at the DFPS State Office. Youth Specialists play a key role in the development and support of Youth Leadership Councils, ensure that the voices of foster youth are heard, and engage foster youth in advocating activities. Youth specialists also serve to help strengthen and support CPS casework by informing DFPS of initiatives and activities affecting policy and practice.

National Youth in Transition Data Base (NYTD)

NYTD is a data collection system created to track independent living services and to learn how successful states are in preparing youth to move from foster care into adulthood. Texas surveys youth in foster care when they turn age 17 and conducts follow-up surveys of some of these same youth at age 19 and again at age 21. Every three years a new cohort of 17 year olds is surveyed.

Employment Preference to Former Foster Youth

Texas state agencies are required to give an employment preference to former foster youth (in the PMC of DFPS on the day of the young adult's 18th birthday) over other state applicants for the same position who do not have a greater qualification. An individual is entitled to an employment preference only if the young adult is 25 years of age or younger (day before turning 26). PAL staff will issue the employment preference letter to eligible young adults when they turn 18 or upon request.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR YOUTH

- **PAL Experiential Camp**-A camp held annually for youth (when a contractor is available) aimed at increasing self- esteem, improving communication skills, problem-solving and having fun.
- **PAL Statewide Teen Conference**-An annual three day conference held on a college campus offering workshops for youth that lead to self-sufficiency and independence.
- **PAL College Conferences**-Texas A&M Commerce and Lone Star College each host an annual two day conference for youth to learn about and prepare for higher education opportunities to include vocational programs.
- **Agging-Out Seminars** -Regions provide seminars to youth at age 17 before they leave care. Seminars include topics identified by youth to reinforce their knowledge and skills about DFPS programs, benefits, resources and other life skills such as nutrition and information about human trafficking. These seminars build on information from PAL Life Skills Training classes.
- **Regional Youth Leadership Councils (YLC) or Youth Advisory Boards**- Benefits of youth participation in a YLC include:
 - Opportunities for Community Services and Outreach projects to support foster youth;
 - Advocacy training to ensure the voices of foster youth are heard and incorporated into policy and practice;



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES

Revised **JULY** 2016

- Leadership building skills;
- Planning and facilitating events;
- Learn how to strategically share their story; and
- Developing supportive friendships/caring adults
- **Regional conferences or events-** Regions provide teen conferences and other age-appropriate activities and events such as college conferences, back to school events, prom events, graduation celebrations, or holiday celebrations.

Partnerships

Transition Centers provide one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of current and former foster youth, homeless youth, or other at-risk youth. Services may include employment assistance, educational support, access and referrals to community partners and resources and various transitional living services such as PAL classes, food and housing assistance, and substance abuse / mental health counseling. Transition Centers also provide co-location opportunities for local partners such as local Workforce Solutions staff, TWC funded Workforce Advocates, and colleges and universities to jointly serve the diverse needs of the youth in one location. As of March 2016 there are 16 Transition Centers which are independently funded, operated and supported by partnerships between DFPS, their Providers, community partners and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). A list of these Centers with contact information is available at the Texas Youth Connection Contacts page: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/contacts/transition.asp>

Texas Workforce Commission/Local Workforce Boards Partnership: DFPS regional offices and 28 local Workforce Development Boards have jointly developed and entered into agreements addressing the unique challenges facing current and former foster youth transitioning to a successful adulthood, including improving employment outcomes for these youth. The purpose of the MOU relates to:

- Furthering the objectives of the DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program;
- Ensuring services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of current and former foster youth; and
- Making referrals, where feasible, for short term housing for foster youth who need housing.

DFPS staff, caregivers, and PAL contractors refer youth ages 16 and older to local *Texas Workforce Solutions* office's for job search and readiness assistance, career exploration, and employment and training services. Each Board has designated a point of contact for staff and youth to access for assistance and services. All youth and young adults are encouraged to register in the state job search system www.WorkInTexas.com.

Contact Information is at: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/Default.asp>

ABOUT TEXAS FOSTER YOUTH JUSTICE PROJECT

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project provides free and confidential legal assistance to current foster youth and those who have aged out of foster care. We can help you with legal issues related to being in foster care and successfully transitioning out of foster care.

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

4920 N IH 35
Austin, Texas 78751
Phone: (877) 313-3688
Fax: (512) 447-3940
Email: info@texasfosteryouth.org
Web: www.texasfosteryouth.org

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

www.texasfosteryouth.org
(877) 313-3688

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project



Knowledge

Action

Power

Get a lawyer you can trust from the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project. The Project provides free and confidential legal assistance to foster youth and former foster youth.

Do you want to...

- stay in contact with your siblings?
- go to your CPS court hearings?
- get health insurance?
- get benefits and services for aged out foster youth?
- tell the court where you want to live and go to school?
- get a tuition waiver so you can go to college for free?
- understand your immigration status?
- change your name?
- get a copy of your CPS records?
- have a say in what medication you take?
- get identification documents such as birth certificates, social security cards and State IDs?
- get PAL (Preparation for Adult Living) services?
- learn about extended foster care?
- learn about housing benefits?
- ask a question your caseworker can't answer?
- access government benefits such as Medicaid and SSI?

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- You have the right to attend your court hearings and speak to the judge.
- You have the right to a Texas identification card, social security card, and birth certificate when you are 16 years old.
- You have the right to stay in foster care or return to foster care after you turn 18.
- You have the right to visit and have contact with your siblings.
- You have the right to send and receive unopened mail.
- You have the right to benefits and services for aged out foster youth.
- You have the right to report abuse, neglect, or exploitation without fear of punishment or retaliation.
- You have the right to keep the money you earn.

You have many, many more rights.

TAKE ACTION TO KEEP YOUR RIGHTS

If you know your legal rights and take action based on that knowledge, you have the power to change the system. You have rights even after you age out of foster care. You have the power to make the system better. It's up to you to speak out so that your rights are protected.

If you think something isn't right, you should contact the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project.

You can:

- Visit our web site at www.texasfosteryouth.org/ask_legal_question.html;
- E-mail us at info@texasfosteryouth.org; or
- Call us at (877) 313-3688.



COLLEGE PROGRAMS/RESOURCES FOR DFPS FOSTER YOUTH, ADOPTED YOUTH & CERTAIN YOUTH THAT EXIT TO A PARENT OR NON-PARENT OR ENTER THE PCA PROGRAM-AUGUST 2016



What is the STATE COLLEGE AND TUITION WAIVER?	What is the EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) program?	What OTHER DFPS EDUCATION RESOURCES are available?
<p>The waiver provides exemption of tuition and fees at Texas public institutions of higher education for youth formerly in Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) conservatorship, adopted youth, and certain other youth. Students must enroll in a state supported school or a dual credit course by their 25th birthday.</p> <p>Who is Eligible? All individuals in DFPS Conservatorship (substitute care) in one of the circumstances listed below.</p> <p>FOSTER YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the day preceding the student's 18th birthday; the day of the student's 14th birthday, if also eligible for adoption on or after that day; the date the student graduates from high school or receives the equivalent of a high school diploma. <p>RETURN TO THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> if a youth was age 14 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and in DFPS's Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC); OR if a youth was age 16 or older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC). <p>PMC TO A NON-PARENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMC was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009. <p>ADOPTED YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009; OR adopted and the subject of an adoption assistance agreement for monthly financial assistance and Medicaid. (No age limit for college enrollment for these students.) <p>DUAL CREDIT COURSES Students can use the waiver to enroll in a dual credit course that offers joint high school and college credit.</p>	<p>The federal ETV program may provide up to \$5,000 an academic year to eligible students for college related expenses including rent, books, utilities, childcare, computers, personal expenses, transportation and tuition, if applicable. Funds awarded are based on the college's estimated cost of attendance.</p> <p>Who is Eligible? All individuals in DFPS Conservatorship (substitute care) in one of the circumstances listed below.</p> <p>FOSTER YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> who are at least 16 and likely to remain in care until 18; or who age out foster care but are not yet 21. <p>YOUTH WHO ENTER PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE (PCA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not yet age 21 and entered the PCA program after age 16 <p>ADOPTED YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not yet age 21 and are adopted after turning age 16 <p>OTHER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas Juvenile Justice Department - youth must be in the custody of or under the jurisdiction of a local juvenile probation department AND were in a Title IV-E placement receiving Title IV-E payments on the day they turn 18. Tribal youth in tribal foster care Unaccompanied refugee minors <p><i>Students age 21 up to age 23:</i> An eligible student who has participated in, applied for and been approved for ETV before his/her 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23rd birthday as long as they are continuously enrolled and making satisfactory academic progress toward completion of their school approved degree or certificate program.</p> <p><i>*Note:</i> Undocumented youth are not eligible for ETV.</p>	<p>The federal Preparation For Adult Living (PAL) Services program assists older youth in foster care and former foster youth to prepare to transition to a successful adulthood.</p> <p>Who is Eligible? Youth in DFPS paid substitute care are the priority population for PAL services.</p> <p>FOSTER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> who are at least age 16 or older and likely to remain in foster care until at least age 18. may qualify for PAL services up to their 21st birthday. <p>PAL Benefits/Services: <u>Transitional Living Allowance</u> - Up to \$1,000 and must meet the qualification requirements to include completion of PAL Life Skills Training.</p> <p><u>Aftercare Room and Board Assistance</u> - Based on need and emergency, up to \$500 a month (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments) and have been in DFPS paid care at age 18 and meet qualification requirements.</p> <p><u>Other</u> - Independent living skills training, support services as needed (i.e., counseling, driver education).</p> <p>PAL Staff Contact List: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp</p>

COLLEGE PROGRAMS/RESOURCES FOR DFPS FOSTER YOUTH, ADOPTED YOUTH & CERTAIN YOUTH THAT EXIT TO A PARENT OR NON-PARENT OR ENTER THE PCA PROGRAM-AUGUST 2016



What schools, programs, and courses can be used with the STATE COLLEGE AND TUITION WAIVER?	What schools, programs, and courses can be used with the EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM?	What other DFPS SCHOLARSHIPS may be available?
<p>Eligible students can attend any Texas state-supported colleges and universities, including public medical school, public dental schools, or public technical institutes.</p> <p>GENERAL INFORMATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fees are waived if required for education purposes (i.e., lab or other mandatory fees). • skills training programs offered at community and technical colleges must be funded with state formula funds to be eligible for the tuition waiver. • DFPS PAL and other designated staff verify eligibility for the waiver letter (Form 1003). Students submit the waiver letter when registering for school. • adopted students who are subject to an adoption assistance agreement must meet required school Grade Point Average (GPA) and other course completion requirements. • Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THCEB) offer outreach programs to ensure that foster youth in grades 9-12 are aware of the tuition and fee waiver. <p>As of January 1, 2016 each state college/university now has a Foster Care Student Liaison to help former foster youth access services and receive assistance. Foster Care Student Liaison List</p> <p>The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provides helpful information needed for youth/young adults to plan for college at http://www.collegeforallexans.com/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply Texas - College Application https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX • Compare Colleges Texas (2 and 4 year schools) http://comparecollegetx.com/ <p>Statutory Citation: Texas Education Code §§54.366, 54.367, 40 Texas Administrative Code §700.1630.</p>	<p>Eligible students can attend an *accredited or pre-accredited private, public or non-profit institution of higher education that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a two-year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or • provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation; or • offers training programs and have been in existence for at least two years preparing students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than a year). <p>Students must enroll in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 6 semester hours; or • 3 semester hours if enrolled in a summer session or a dual college credit course. <p>Correspondence, Distance Education, or Continuing Education courses are allowed if part of a student's academic degree or certificate program. Prior approval by the ETV staff is needed to ensure proper school accreditation and course qualifications.</p> <p>Students apply at: www.texasetv.com or call 1-877-268-4063.</p> <p>More information about these college programs is available at the Texas Youth Connection website: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/tyyouth/education/paying_for_college.asp</p> <p>*Note: all of the schools/programs listed above must be accredited or have been granted pre-accreditation status by an agency or organization that has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.</p> <p>Statutory Citation: P.L. 110-351, 42 U.S.C. §677, 40 Texas Administrative Code §700.1613</p>	<p>If a youth/young adult aged out of DFPS foster care, completed the PAL life skills training program, and met other requirements they may be eligible for scholarships. These funds can be used to supplement any school expenses not covered by the ETV program, scholarships, or federal grants.</p> <p>DFPS SCHOLARSHIPS: Freshmen Success Fund for Foster Youth (est. April 2013): This is a one-time grant of \$1,000 available for first time college freshmen formerly in DFPS foster care. These grants must cover basic, non-tuition related expenses such as books and supplies, computers and software, tools and uniforms, and transportation. Students must be enrolled in a Texas state-supported college, university, or vocational school that accepts the tuition and fee waiver.</p> <p>C. Ed Davis-PAL Scholarship (est. July 2012): This scholarship is for basic, non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. Scholarships are for \$1,000 per academic year and are available to sophomore, junior, or senior year students.</p> <p>Note: Scholarships received may affect the amount of ETV funds to be awarded because they are factored in with other sources of funds received by the student.</p> <p>More information is available at the Texas Youth Connection website: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/tyyouth/education/scholarships.asp</p>



Former Foster Care Children's (FFCC) Medicaid



What is FFCC?

Former Foster Care Children's Medicaid (FFCC) is available to former foster youth under the Affordable Care Act up to the age of 26. To qualify, someone must have aged out of foster care or the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Resettlement Program in the state of Texas at age 18 or older, received federally funded Medicaid when they aged out of foster care, be between the ages of 18 up to 26, currently live in Texas, and meet the citizenship/immigration status requirements. There is no income or asset limit!

How do I apply?

You can apply online at www.yourtexasbenefits.com. Be sure to select that you are a "Person who: (1) is age 25 or younger, and (2) was age 18 or older when they were in foster care or the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor's Resettlement Program."

You can also print and mail or fax form [H 1205](#) Application for Health Coverage & Help Paying Costs from www.yourtexasbenefits.com. Or you can call 2-1-1 and request the form be sent to you. Be sure to check "Yes" for Question #17: "Were you in foster care at age 18 or older?" There is information about where to send the application at the end of the form.

What do I have to do to keep my coverage?

Keep your address up to date so you can receive renewal notices and other important information. You can change your address online or by calling 2-1-1. When you receive the renewal notice, send the requested information. The most important thing is to send something that shows your current address or where you receive mail. If you have an unstable housing situation, you or someone familiar with your situation can send a letter stating your name and that you don't have stable housing, but that you live in Texas and receive mail at the address you include.

What if I am denied or have questions?

You can call 2-1-1 between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm, Central Standard Time, Monday through Friday. Say "I need to talk to the foster youth specialist." If you continue to have issues or have any questions, you can contact the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project toll free at 877-313-3688 or at info@texasfosteryouth.org. You can find more information about FFCC at TexasFosterYouth.org in the Health Insurance/ Medical section.

