



## Supporting Teens Leaving Care: Resources & Guidance for Foster Parents

Take a moment and reflect on when you were a young adult thinking about making the leap from living at home to moving out on your own. Were you excited? Were you scared? Were your feelings a complex combination of both exhilaration and fear? Did you have a reliable support network that was available for you in case you needed to move back home because living on your own was much more expensive than you had anticipated, or college was more difficult than you had expected?

There are a number of challenges that can present themselves for young people in foster care who are approaching this milestone moment of living independently. As foster parents, you can help the tweens and teens in your care prepare for this transition by starting as early as possible—especially if the identified goal in the permanency plan is for the youth to transition from foster care to living on their own, or living with others.

### The Critical & Ongoing Roles of Foster Parents

The transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency can be an incredibly challenging journey for any young person. For teenagers who have been in foster care, the upcoming

transition to adulthood is often an intimidating and, at times, overwhelming experience.

There are a multitude of responsibilities that these young adults will need to familiarize themselves with, manage, and navigate:

#### *Housing Resources*

- Locating safe and affordable housing options
- Understanding what a rental agreement or lease is and the consequences that will occur if they do not fulfill these contracts
- Investing enough money for a security deposit and first month's rent

#### *Financial*

- Learning how to manage and maintain a budget
- Setting up a checking and savings account
- Balancing their checkbook
- Earning enough money to cover daily living expenses
- Applying for postsecondary financial aid options
- Obtaining health, auto, and rental insurance coverage
- Establishing a savings account for unexpected expenses



Continued on page 2



6682 West Greenfield, Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
800-762-8063  
info@coalitionforforyf.org

© 2008;  
updated 2013,  
2018

In partnership with:



### Employment

- Knowing where to seek out job opportunities
- Developing resume skills
- Establishing interviewing skills
- Being responsible at work (being on time, being responsible, respecting authority, etc.)

### Transportation

- Developing a transportation plan (public transportation vs. owning a car; walking vs. riding a bike)

### Education

- How to apply for post-secondary education
- Balancing work, school, and personal life balance
- Financial Aid

### Wellness

- Maintaining a healthy and balanced diet
- Focusing on physical fitness and wellness
- Focusing on mental health
- Focusing on mindfulness
- Locating and accessing community resources and support services

These are just a few examples of the responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities young people look forward to. The good news is that there are support systems and resources available to help them succeed. As one young person formerly in foster care shared, *“When you are a young adult leaving care, you find you are often ill prepared for adult life and do not have the networks to support you if an emergency occurs. For most young people, 18-24 are years when*

*they take risks and figure out what career path they want to follow. Being a support for youth can allow them to transition into adulthood and give them a chance to explore opportunities, develop financial independence, and create healthy, lifelong relationships.”*

This is where you, as foster parents, have an opportunity to help prepare and support the youth in your care. Listen and talk with them about their thoughts, plans, and hopes for their future. Provide them with opportunities to learn and practice new skills. Empower youth to build positive connections with others and cultivate new connections and community supports



All of us rely on the guidance and advice from our circles of support. We look to those people to lift us up when we are feeling down and to offer suggestions when we are unsure of what to do. At a time when most young adults are still relying on family for financial and emotional support, youth who are transitioning from care are often fully on their own.

But they do not have to be. As foster parents, you have the opportunity to provide integral support and ongoing connections for these young adults as they take their next steps in life. You might:

- Be a mentor
- Offer guidance, support, and advice
- Be an advocate

Continued on page 3



6682 West Greenfield, Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
800-762-8063  
info@coalitionforcyf.org

© 2008;  
updated 2013,  
2018

In partnership with:



- Provide compassionate and empathetic listening
- Be a scout for local, state, and online resources
- Celebrate successful choices and use the not-so-successful outcomes as learning and growth experiences.

Following are some further ideas for supporting the youth in your care:

*Daily living & life skills.* Young people often learn best through first-hand experiences. Incorporating every day “teachable moments” to provide valuable



to a supportive, caring adult. Connectedness and a sense of belonging is one of the important gifts we can give to these young people and this is definitely one of the gifts that keeps on giving.

lessons about paying bills, investing money for needs that will arise in the future, how to complete a job application, knowing how to properly load the washer, and teaching cooking skills, are a few examples of life skills that you can teach the youth in your care.

*A personalized transition plan.* The sooner the discussion about the topic of transition planning is initiated, the more opportunities will become available for you and the youth in your care to explore some interactive experiences. Asking them open ended questions about what their goals and dreams are will provide wonderful insights.

The same holds true for the more practical goals. For example, going to a bank or credit union and opening a checking and/or savings account is a life skill that is helpful to learn before a young person ventures out in the world. Searching together for housing

options, such as apartments, might be enlightening for the young person in your care, and provide an opening for conversations about where the youth would like to live, the practicalities of rent, and the rules and realities that come with renting or leasing a place of their own.

*Building positive community connections.*

One of the most important building blocks of resilience for a young person is a connection

to a supportive, caring adult. Connectedness and a sense of belonging is one of the important gifts we can give to these young people and this is definitely one of the gifts that keeps on giving.

As young adults move forward, it becomes essential for them to develop and maintain supportive relationships that will empower them to reach and achieve their goals. Having open and honest conversations and discussions about their goals, hopes, and dreams can provide you with insightful information that you can use to help guide the youth in your care toward other supportive adults. Perhaps that means a connection you have with someone in your faith-based community, school, work, or service club. Facilitating those connections for the youth in your care can help weave a safe and supportive network of people who care about the youth and are willing to continue offering support, insight, and opportunities to grow.

*A permanency pact.* A permanency pact is a pledge by a supportive adult to provide specific supports to a young person in foster

Continued on page 4



6682 West Greenfield, Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
800-762-8063  
info@coalitionforcyf.org

© 2008;  
updated 2013,  
2018

In partnership with:



care with a goal of establishing a lifelong, kin-like relationship. [This example](#) was created by FosterClub, a national network for young people in foster care. You might use something similar with the youth in your care, as well as encourage them to create similar agreements with other caring adults in their lives.

*Post-secondary educational options & resources.* There are a wide range of post-secondary options that are available for young people that exist today, from types of schools (public, private, non-profit, and for-profit) to types of programs (targeted certificate programs, apprenticeships, two-year Associate degree programs, four-year plus programs, and a variety of others). The Foster Care Transition [Toolkit](#), created by the United States of America Department of Education, has a wealth of information from how to apply to a school or program, information about standardized testing, and financial aid options, all the way to suggestions on how young people can prepare themselves for the rigors associated with ongoing education. This toolkit is also intended as a resource for caring and supportive adults. There is no doubt that transitioning to adulthood can be a challenging experience for any young person to undertake. For young people who are beginning this journey from foster care to independence and self-sufficiency, the journey can be even more daunting. All you do to help educate, support, and empower the youth in your care makes an incredible difference today and into their futures. If you need further information, resources, or support, please contact our team of Resource Specialists.



## Resources

From [our Lending Library](#)

- [Helping Teens in Care Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [Keys to Independence: Finding Your First Apartment](#)

Resources on our Website(s)

- [Scholarship Information](#)

Additional Web Resources

- [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Scholarship Contact Persons](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families: Youth Services Paying for College](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: Helping Youth Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [FosterClub: Helping Youth for the Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [Foster Care Transition Tool Kit](#)
- [Engage 4 Youth](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: Education Resources](#)
- [Annie E. Casey Foundation Youth Opportunities Initiative](#)
- [Youth.Gov](#)
- [Youth Communications](#)



6682 West Greenfield, Suite 310  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
800-762-8063  
[info@coalitionforfyf.org](mailto:info@coalitionforfyf.org)

© 2008;  
updated 2013,  
2018

In partnership with:

