

What's It All About?



**A Guidebook for Youth in
Out-of-Home Care**

Introduction

If you are receiving this guidebook, you are over age 14 and have just come into out-of-home care or have turned 14 while being in out-of-home care and are in the Children's Division custody. This handbook should help answer some of your questions. It deals with subjects that may be of special interest to you, such as school, money, clothing and preparing for your future.

This book was developed to help you during your time in out-of-home care. It cannot possibly include everything we would like you to know but it is hoped that this will give you some direction of your rights and responsibilities while in out-of-home care. This guidebook was originally created and published in 1992. This is the third revision (2015) having been previously revised by members of the State Youth Advisory Board in 1996 and 2001. Information from *The Missouri Resource Parent Handbook*, the *Handbook for Parents of Children in Alternative Care*, *Stand Up*, and *FosterClub* has been incorporated. Suggestions from the Kids in Court workgroup, the 2012 State Youth Advisory Board, staff from the Children's Division, and the Youth Independence Interdepartmental Initiative have been included as well. Thank you to all who have made a contribution to make this possible.

Although accurate at the time of publishing, this book is subject to change at any time with laws and policy. If you have any questions after reading this handbook, please talk to your Children's Service Worker, foster parent/care provider or Chafee Specialist.

**Missouri Department of Social Services
Children's Division
P.O. Box 88
Jefferson City, Missouri 65103**

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It's All About Me!



Name: _____

Address: _____

Very Important Names and Numbers:

_____	_____
Case Manager	Phone
_____	_____
Supervisor	Phone
_____	_____
Deputy Juvenile Officer	Phone
_____	_____
Guardian Ad Litem/CASA Worker	Phone
_____	_____
Juvenile/Family Court Judge	Phone
_____	_____
Chafee Specialist	Phone
_____	_____
Other	Phone
_____	_____
Other	Phone

What is the Children's Division?



The Missouri Children's Division, by law, is required to accept and investigate all reports of child abuse and/or neglect of children and youth under age 18. Other laws require that the Children's Division serve the needs of Missouri's children by providing services to help with family problems, and where needed, alternative placement outside the home when such placement is in the best interest of the youth.



The Children's Division's mission is:

To protect Missouri children from abuse and neglect; assuring their safety and well-being by partnering with families, communities and government in an ethically, culturally and socially responsible manner.

The Children Division's Guiding Principles

PREVENTION - Families are supported through proactive, intentional activities that promote positive child development and prevent abuse and neglect.

PROTECTION - Children have a right to be safe and live free from abuse and neglect.

PRESERVATION – The cultural and ethnic diversity of the children and families of Missouri are recognized, honored and respected.

PARTNERSHIP - Families, communities and government share the responsibility to create safe, nurturing environments for families to raise their children.

PRACTICE - The family is the basic building block of society and is irreplaceable. Families are empowered to identify and access services that support, preserve and strengthen their functioning.

PERMANENCY - Children are entitled to enduring, nurturing relationships that provide stability and belonging through family and community connections.

PROFESSIONALISM - Staff are valued, respected and supported throughout their career, and in turn provide quality service with value, respect and support for families.



What is Out-of-Home Care?

Out-of-home care, including foster care, is an alternative for a child/youth when something has gone wrong that prevents the family from safely staying together. Sometimes this is because of suspected abuse or neglect, illness, substance abuse or when no caregiver is available to care for the child/youth. A Juvenile/Family Court judge makes the decision to place a child/youth in out-of-home care after he/she has reviewed information about the family and situation. The Juvenile/Family Court judge will grant the Missouri Children's Division legal custody for appropriate placement.

Placement away from parents is made to insure the safety and well-being of a child/youth during a family crisis. There is not a set time frame for returning youth to their parent (s); however the goal of the Children's Division is to help resolve the problem and bring your families back together safely as soon as possible.

You are in the custody of the Children's Division but your parents have not lost their parental rights. They still retain legal rights unless a Juvenile/Family Court judge terminates those rights. Termination of parental rights is a possibility whenever a youth is removed. However, this is not considered immediately. By law, Children's Division is required to make every effort to place youth with a grandparent or other relative. Your family should be asked about the non-custodial parent, grandparents, and other relatives at the time of removal or at the time of the first Family Support Team meeting. If you think of someone who could provide for you, let your Children's Service Worker or Family Support Team know. The person must pass a background check before you could be placed in their home. Your parents have a voice in the matter but the Juvenile/Family Court judge has the final say so.

The decision to return you to your home is made by the judge with information provided by the Family Support Team (FST) members. You may learn new ways of communicating, of dealing with feelings, or handling problems. You might also learn better ways to make good choices for your future.

There could be many different people (Children's Service Workers, therapists, counselors, foster parents, child care workers, juvenile officers) working with you and your family. It is important that you work with all these people in order to have a successful placement. Everyone is there to help you!

Going into a Placement

Being placed in out-of-home care is not an easy thing to go through. It is very typical for you to experience many different feelings...anger, sadness, anxiety, fear, and sometimes even relief. You can help yourself feel better about your situation by talking about your feelings and asking questions. You are not alone. There are others in similar situations.



Placement Types

While you are in care, you may be in different types of placement. *Some of these are:*



- ❖ **Parental Care:** The youth may be placed with a non-custodial parent. The youth would still be in Division custody until either the youth can be reunified with the custodial parent or the non-custodial parent obtains an order giving them custody.
- ❖ **Relative Care:** The youth is placed with a blood or step relative. This could be anyone from a grandparent to a cousin to a step-sibling. The relative and all household members age 17 and older must have child abuse and neglect as well as criminal background checks completed prior to the youth being placed in the home. Additional requirements, such as a physical safety check of the household, must be done prior to placement.
- ❖ **Kinship Care:** The youth is placed with someone they know and with whom they have a prior relationship but there is no blood relationship. The household members age 17 or older must have the background checks

completed prior to the youth being placed in the home. As with Relative Care, there are additional requirements that must be met before placement may occur.

- ❖ **Traditional Foster Care:** This is a home where the parent(s) have been licensed by the state to provide alternative care to one or more youth. The resource providers have received training and have completed background checks. This type of foster care is provided to the majority of the youth in alternative care.



- ❖ **Residential Care:** This is the most restrictive placement type available. The child/youth is placed in a facility that is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The staff works with the child/youth on their behavioral issues in addition to the child meeting with a therapist on a regular basis. The facilities also encourage family therapy and will want you to participate. Residential facilities are not in every county so this may require the child/youth to move away from their home community.
- ❖ **Transitional Living Program (TLP):** The Transitional Living Program (TLP) is intended for youth, typically age 16 and over; whose permanency goal is not reunification, adoption or legal guardianship. The purpose of the Transitional Living Program is to provide a living environment that is supportive while providing a path for the youth to transition from out-of-home care to self-sufficiency. Independent living is the goal of this program.
- ❖ **Transitional Living Advocate (TLA):** A youth resides with an adult, 21 years of age or older, who provides the youth a safe place to stay, continued life skills training, encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for successful transition from Children's Division custody. The TLA may be married or single and is willing to provide the time, a home, supervision and support needed by the youth transitioning out of care. They must be successful in

their own independence, i.e., employed, maintain a household and generally provide a positive role model for the youth. The advocate should be similar to or understanding of the youth's race or ethnic background. It is hoped the advocate will become a life-long friend and mentor for the youth, allowing the youth to return for visits, holidays and occasional support.

This program is a privilege with responsibilities. Youth must be at least 16 years old and enrolled in Chafee services. Youth should have good decision making skills, a clear understanding of program expectations, the ability to manage money, average to above average school performance, and be willing to maintain employment. The youth should not require close supervision. Youth are encouraged to have pre-placement visits with a potential advocate to increase the likelihood of a successful match.



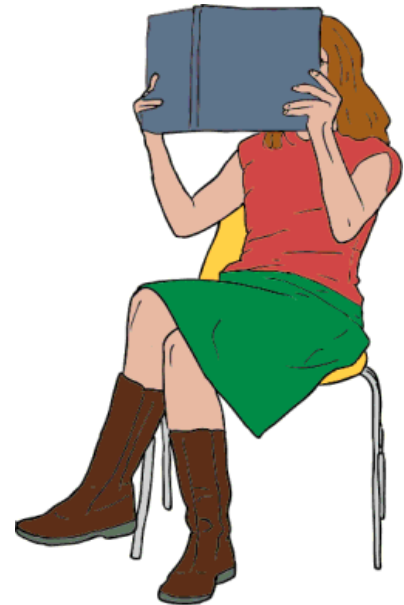
Once a TLA placement occurs, the youth receives \$586.00 per month maintenance. \$450.00 per month is paid by the youth to the advocate for food and rent expenses and life skills training. The youth uses \$136.00 per month for other expenses such as clothing, school/work, personal hygiene, transportation, etc.

- ❖ **Transitional Living Group Home (TLG):** A licensed, residential, child care site where older youth, ages 16-18, who have a plan of independent living concentrate on preparation for independent living and completion of their educational/vocational programs in a supervised group setting. Youth are currently enrolled and actively participating in Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services. Youth should not work more than 20 hours per week, if they attend school full time. Typically, youth entering a TLG have been residing in a residential treatment facility. Youth are expected to maintain employment and develop goals and plans for their future. All

facilities that are contracted as TLP group homes are licensed as residential child care agencies by the Residential Program Unit within Central Office.

❖ **Transitional Living Single and Scattered**

Site Apartments (TLS): This program offers youth, ages 18-20, with a plan of independent living, ideally from a TLP group home, the opportunity to practice life skills and prepare for the future in an apartment setting. Youth in this type of placement receive support and guidance, but supervision is minimal. To be considered for TLS, youth need to demonstrate the ability to make responsible decisions, maintain employment, and have a clear understanding of the financial and emotional demands of living independently. Youth entering TLS ideally would be currently enrolled and actively participating in Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services. A scattered site apartment is a self-contained, furnished (refrigerator, stove, bed, oven, table, chairs, etc.) unit with utilities (trash, sewer/water, electricity/gas, phone accessibility, etc.) cooking, sleeping, and bath facilities for no more than one (1) youth per bedroom. Scattered site apartments may include apartments adjacent to other treatment programs, or sites scattered throughout the community and/or apartments clustered together. The apartment must provide a pleasant, clean, safe and healthful environment. Placement settings are located in community environments to allow the youth full access to services and resources in order to fully develop independent living skills.



❖ **Independent Living Arrangement:** An Independent Living Arrangement is a state-approved and subsidized placement option for youth age 17 and older who cannot return home. The case manager along with the Family Support Team (FST) determines the youth's suitability for placement in an independent living arrangement, by assessing the youth's motivation, abilities, skills and capabilities for living independently and ultimate emancipation from

the service delivery system. There are a variety of housing options available to youth who have demonstrated the skills/competencies to live in an independent living arrangement. Whatever option is selected by the youth, it must be stable and safe and in a community setting that allows the youth full access to services and resources in order to fully develop independent living skills.

Leaving a placement and living on your own is a big step and can be an exciting and scary time. It is normal to have mixed feelings about it. By thinking and planning ahead, you will be much better prepared to successfully take this step when the time comes. If you are 14 or older, your Children's Service Worker will offer you services for independent living preparation. An independent living case plan, the Adolescent Family Support Team Guide and Individualized Action Plan, will be developed to help you progress towards your goals.





Most youth in the custody of Children's Division are involved with the Family or Juvenile Court because they have been abused or neglected or abandoned by their parents. You can also become involved with the Court if you are truant, if you break laws which apply only to youth, or if you commit a crime.

The Juvenile/Family Court helps with the care, protection and discipline of children who come within the jurisdiction. The mission of the court is to ensure that each child coming within the jurisdiction of the Juvenile/Family Court receive such care, guidance and control, preferably in his/her own home, as will conduce to the child's welfare and the best interests of the state. The Juvenile/Family Court, in most cases, does not initiate actions; rather, its role is to wait until another agency or individual refers a case of possible child abuse or neglect to it for action. The Court may order your parents to pay child support or order your parents to have physical, psychological or medical examinations.

When you become involved with the Court, you are assigned a Deputy Juvenile Officer (DJO). Your DJO will talk with you when you first enter foster care about why you are in placement. Your DJO will provide you with a brochure entitled "Court Guide for Youth in Foster Care" that is also available at this link: http://dssweb/cs/programs/fcooh/kic_brochure.pdf. Your DJO is the person who handles the legal part of your case - he/she presents the case to the judge and makes recommendations. If you have questions about how the Court works, your DJO is a good person to talk with.

You will also have an attorney appointed to represent you in Court. If you are involved because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, your attorney is called a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL). Your GAL is responsible for representing your best interest in Court and making recommendations to the judge. The GAL is responsible for making your wishes known even when they differ from the GAL's recommendations. It's a good idea to get to know your GAL before Court. You may request another GAL if you feel that you are not being understood. If you are involved with the Court because you have committed a crime, you should be assigned a public defender.

You may also have a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) assigned to you. CASA's are trained volunteers, appointed by the judges. CASA advocate for youth and provide written reports and recommendations to the judge. The CASA program is not available in every county.

Your parents also have the right to have an attorney. Their attorney could be someone they hire or someone appointed by the Court who presents their case to the judge.

There may also be other attorneys involved with your case. Your DJO may have an attorney who assists in presenting information regarding your situation to the judge. The Children's Division may have an attorney.



The judge (or commissioner, hearings officer) hears the evidence regarding the case at Court hearings and makes decisions based on the laws and your best interests.

There will be several Court hearings and it is encouraged that you attend. These hearings are held before a judge or hearing officer, sometimes called a commissioner. You may have to testify at the hearings. All the attorneys will have the chance to ask you questions. Sometimes the judge might even ask you questions.

At your hearings, the judge (or commissioner, hearings officer) listens to everything that everyone says. After all the information has been presented, a decision (disposition) will be made about your situation and what is best for you. Remember, **a Court order must be obeyed**. If you do not, you could get in trouble.

Once you are under jurisdiction of the Court (formally involved with the Court and have them in your life) and in placement, you will have an annual review hearing.

Going to Court can be frightening. It is perfectly normal to feel nervous. Many adults also get nervous when they have to go to Court.



Going to Court

Here are some tips to help prepare for going to Court:

- ❖ You have a right to be present in the courtroom.
- ❖ You have a right to be heard and must be consulted on your permanency plan. If you do not understand something talk with your Children's Service Worker, GAL and/or CASA, or DJO. You should know their recommendations before court.
- ❖ Let your Children's Service Worker, DJO, GAL and/or CASA know before and/or at Court if you want to tell the Judge something.
- ❖ If you don't know who is taking you to court ask your Children's Service Worker or care provider.
- ❖ Find out what you can expect to happen in court.
- ❖ Dress appropriately. Your clothes make a statement about you. If you have questions, ask.
- ❖ If you can, visit the courtroom before the hearing.
- ❖ Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and answer as best as you can. If you don't understand a question, say so. If you do not have an answer for a question, say so.
- ❖ Always answer truthfully and in a respectful manner. Refer to the judge as "Your Honor" or "Sir" or "Ma'am." Do not interrupt when others are speaking.
- ❖ Ask to leave the court room if you are uncomfortable or upset.

There is a list of the different types of Court hearing in the "Glossary of Important Terms" section of this handbook.

It's Your Voice, Your Life, Your Future



Your participation shows that you are interested in your situation and your future. Going to Court will give you a better understanding of what is going on in your case. The judge, commissioner, or hearings officer may even ask you for your suggestions. Sometimes youth are asked to give testimony. This is a statement which reflects what you saw or what happened to you in your own words. It may be difficult to face everyone as you say these things, even your family. It is very important to be honest in your testimony because this will determine what help the Court needs to offer your family. If you find that you are nervous or scared, just remember that you are surrounded by a group of people working for what is in your best interest.

Hearings are open to the public. If someone is in attendance that makes you feel uncomfortable let your Children's Service Worker, DJO, GAL and/or CASA know. They can request the judge to exclude the public during your testimony.

Make sure that your Children's Service Worker, DJO, GAL, and CASA know what you want to happen in your case and what you want the judge to know. You can speak to the judge when you are in Court and the judge may ask you a specific question. You are encouraged to answer and share other information that you think is important for the judge to know. No one is allowed to speak to the judge alone. If you disagree with the judge, let your GAL know immediately and they may then voice your concern to the judge.

It is a good idea to create and bring a portfolio that has your school papers, report cards, etc. You may want to write down some notes if you are worried about remembering what you want to say.

If attending Court will create difficulties let your Children's Service Worker, DJO, GAL and/or CASA know. It may be possible to hold the hearing when school is not in session or when it is easier for you to miss school. If you are not able to attend, you may want to write a letter addressed to the judge and send this information to your Children's Service Worker, DJO, GAL and CASA. Ask those who attended what happened.

PERMANENCY PLANNING

Planning conferences called Permanency Planning Review Team (PPRT) meetings will be held to develop and review the permanency plan for you and your family. The purpose of the permanency plan is to make sure that you receive proper care while in out-of-home placement. Services are provided to your parents to improve the conditions in their home and to assist in your return home or to another permanent placement.



If you are 13 and older, you are required to participate in your Permanency Planning Review Team meetings.

People who can attend these conferences include you, your parents, your parents attorney, your care providers, your Children's Service Worker and his/her supervisor, your Deputy Juvenile Officer, your CASA worker, and your Guardian Ad Litem. Depending on your situation others may be invited such as teachers, school counselors, mental health therapists, relatives, or your Chafee Specialist. You may also ask that a support not listed above be included.

Per federal and state law, you have the right to choose up to two people to be part of your Permanency Planning Team. These individuals are not your Children's Service Worker or out-of-home care provider. One of these individuals selected by you as a member of your Permanency Planning Team may be designated to be your advisor and as necessary, advocate, in applying the federal and state law with respect to the reasonable and prudent parent standard. However, also per federal and state law, Children's Division has the right to reject an individual selected by you to be a member of your case planning team at any time if there is good cause to believe the advocate or advisor would not act in your best interests.

"Reasonable and prudent parent standard" is a standard used when determining whether to allow a youth in out-of-home care with the Children's Division to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. The standard is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a youth while encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the youth." Normalcy, and how this is part of your daily life while in foster care, should be discussed at each Permanency Planning Team meeting - what normalized experiences you have had and exploration of additional opportunities.

If any of the participants cannot attend in person, they may be included through written reports, letters, or telephone calls.

The preliminary case plan will be developed when possible, during the first 24-hour contact with you and your family and is further completed through the participation of all members of the PPRT at a 72-hour meeting. The plan will be updated at the initial 30-day Permanency Planning Review Team Meeting. The entire team should be invited to meet again within six months of the first PPRT meeting and at six-month intervals thereafter. Your time in foster care is meant to be temporary so permanency for you is one of the main goals your team will work on with you and your family. Despite yours, your family, and your Children's Service Workers best efforts, it may not be possible for you to return home to your family.



PERMANENCY OPTIONS

There are several options for permanency such as:

Kinship Care: Relative placement does not prevent adoption or guardianship. Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative, without adoption or guardianship, is not a legally final permanency option so the court must continue to hold annual permanency hearings.

Guardianship: This is usually a recommendation when youth are placed with a relative or kinship care provider. The provider is given legal custody of you through the Court but your parents do not have to give up their parental rights. The Juvenile Court would release jurisdiction and the Children's Division would end their involvement. The guardian has the legal rights of a parent to make decisions for you but if circumstances change and your parents believe they can adequately provide for you, they can petition the court to regain custody of you.

Adoption: This option requires the termination of parental rights. This should only be chosen when it is clear that your parents will not be able to adequately provide for your safety and well-being.

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA): This option is appropriate when there is a specific long-term placement for you and when it has been documented to the Court that compelling reasons exist which make the other permanency options unacceptable. An example of this would be if there is a significant bond between you and your parent(s) but they cannot care for you due to a disability.

If you are a youth in Children's Division custody, at age 18, you have the right to request that the Court release you from custody. However, you may wish to remain in custody if you are still in school and/or do not believe you are ready to live on your own. There are many advantages to remaining in care until you are 21, including financial and emotional support.

Family Support Team

In addition to Court hearings and Permanency Planning Reviews, you will have Family Support Team or Team Decision meetings. The Family Support Team (FST) or Team Decision Meeting (TDM) is designed to help move families through the system and to reduce the amount of time that youth spend in out-of-home care. The FST is comprised of the same people as the PPRT **except** that in the PPRT at least one person not responsible for your case management or delivery of services to you or your parents must participate.



The goal of this team is to strengthen your family and create a safe place for you to live when you return home by determining service and treatment needs for you and your family.



Generally, the Family Support Team or Team Decision Meeting will meet at the 30-day interval and meet every 30 days until the Court adjudication hearing occurs to review progress, revise the treatment plan and recommend that you return home or another option. A FST should be held prior to any action taken relating to a change in placement for you. If you are moved because of an emergency and an FST meeting cannot be held, an FST should occur within 72 hours of your new placement. An FST meeting is to be held prior to the separation of a sibling group.

If you are over the age of 13, you should attend your Family Support Team (FST) meetings unless your Children's Service Worker and his/her supervisor agree that there is a valid reason why you cannot attend the meeting. The fact that you have school is not a valid reason for missing the meeting. FSTs should be scheduled around school hours, when possible. If it is not possible to schedule the meeting around school hours, your worker should ensure that you are not always missing the same class to attend the FST meeting. FSTs should be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient to you and your family. You and your family are vital members of the team and should be present at all FSTs.



You are encouraged to bring your own ideas to the table and involve yourself in all of the topics. You can also lead your own FST! Yes, it is true - a meeting that YOU can organize and move along. It may sound intimidating, but it is very rewarding and even fun. Ways to show that you are ready to lead your own FSTs are by achieving goals set in previous FSTs, being a leader, and showing that you can direct a group of people in discussion. Just imagine how great you will feel while you literally take control of your life! After you get the hang of a few FSTs, ask those at the table about the possibility of you taking charge. They will be impressed and supportive of your decision and help you all the way.

Adoption and Safe Families Act



The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) is federal legislation that provided time frames for child welfare agencies to move youth through the foster care system so they will not be living in foster care indefinitely. ASFA requires the

Children's Division and the Juvenile Court to have hearings at every six months to review your permanency plan. ASFA states that termination of parental rights (TPR) must be filed when a youth has been in care for 15 out of the last 22 months. The Court can give permission to not file for TPR for these reasons only:

- Your family is making progress towards reunification but you cannot return home yet.
- You do not want your parental rights terminated (if over the age of 13).
- It would not be in your best interest because of your behavior.
- You are placed with relatives.

Unless one of these reasons is given to the Court and the Court accepts it, termination of parental rights will be filed with the court. Termination of parental rights is a legal ending to your parents' rights. A Termination of Parental Rights hearing must be held. The judge will make a final ruling.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information in your record and your family's record is confidential. Information can only be given or shared in accordance with agency policy, State and Federal law. All information is shared with the Court. In order to meet your needs, certain confidential information about your family, reasons for your placement, and medical and school history may be shared with your care provider. Your care provider is required to guard the confidential information about you and your family that is given to them. Information that is needed for medical or psychiatric care may be provided to the appropriate practitioners. Foster parents may share information necessary with school personnel in order to secure a safe and appropriate education for you.



Additionally, foster parents may share information they may learn about you and your family, and concerns that arise in the care of you with the Children's Service Worker and other members of the child welfare. Some of your friends and acquaintances may wonder about why you are no longer living with your family. They may ask questions that make you feel uncomfortable. While they may really care about you, they do not have a right to know anything unless you want to tell them.

It is very important that you talk with your Children's Service Worker concerning information that is sensitive to you and ways you can deal with questions from others. You may also want to discuss personal confidentiality issues such as mail, telephone calls, and diaries.



What Does Your Children's Service Worker Do?

Your Children's Service Worker is the worker assigned to provide direct services to you or your family. Some Children's Service Workers are employees of the Children's Division while others are employees of private agencies referred to as Foster Care Case Management Agencies. Foster Care Case Management services are provided through contracts with the Children's Division.

The Children's Service Worker's job, whether public or private, is to provide assessment and placement services, treatment, service, and permanency planning, community resource development, and other services which best meet the needs of the youth and family. Your Children's Service Worker works with you, your parents, and care providers to provide a healthy environment for you. Here is a list of some of your worker's responsibilities:



- To choose the least restrictive and most appropriate placement for you.
- To tell all people involved about the policies and procedures of out-of-home care.
- To arrange reasonable visitation with parents, unless a court order has restricted or denied visits.
- To guard the confidential nature of information about you.
- To provide or arrange services to you and your family which may help solve the problems which led to your placement.
- To provide services to you and your care provider by supporting your present placement.
- To coordinate and participate in developing a written case plan for you and provide the necessary support services to you, your family and your care provider to accomplish the goals set out in the plan.
- To have contact with you at least once a month or as outlined in your case plan.
- To inform the court of your situation and make recommendations about future planning.

If you are 14 years of age or older, to develop an independent living case plan based on an assessment of your life skills and offer services for preparation to adulthood and transitioning out of care.

While your individual case is very important to your Children's Service Worker, remember that he/she also has many other cases and duties to take care of every day. Your Children's Service Worker can help you the most if you always keep scheduled appointments and openly discuss problems before they become emergencies. If you call your Children's Service Worker, make sure you speak clearly and leave a call back number.

The More You Know - Rights and Responsibilities

As a youth in out-of-home placement, you have certain rights and responsibilities. Your family and Children's Service Worker also have rights and responsibilities. Children's Division, the court, your parents and care providers play a large part in the success of your placement. However, the most important part of responsibility lies with you. It's a good idea to discuss this list with your care provider and your Children's Service Worker. These are in place to protect you and give you the most beneficial experience possible.



<i>Rights</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
To receive a nurturing family life experience, including guidance, affection and appropriate discipline.	To participate with your Children's Service Worker and care providers in developing rules and guidelines and to follow them.
To be protected from abuse and/or neglect. To be treated with dignity and respect including your cultural identity such as sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, etc. by all members of your team.	To talk with a responsible adult about any kinds of abuse or neglect by your family, care providers or any other person.
To visit and communicate with family members as stated in the case plan and be notified of any changes. The court could decide that it is in your best interests and limit contact with your family.	To help in the development of the visitation plan. To behave responsibly during visits.
To be told about Family Support Team meetings, Permanency Planning Reviews, and court hearings so that you can participate or have input about the plans being made concerning your life.	To participate in your Family Support Team Meetings, Permanency Planning Reviews, and court hearings by attending in person or being kept informed through letters and telephone calls.
To choose up to two people to be part of your Permanency Planning/Family Support Team and to designate one of these members as your youth advisor and as necessary, your youth advocate in applying the federal and state law with respect to the reasonable and prudent parent standard.	To discuss your choice of youth advisor/advocate with your Case Manager prior to the Permanency Planning/Family Support Team meeting.

<i>Rights</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
When required, to receive physical, dental, and eye exams upon initial placement and other medical care, as needed, thereafter. Also, to receive treatment as prescribed.	To cooperate in keeping scheduled appointments and to follow any prescribed medical treatment.
To be placed in a least restrictive setting that will best meets your needs and be as close to your home as practical, under the circumstances.	To be supportive of your placement. This means showing respect to your care providers, following rules, and communicating with those around you.
To receive information about the circumstances requiring your initial and continued placement.	To ask your Children's Service Worker or care providers to fully explain the circumstances requiring your placement, if you do not understand.
To participate in school, religious, cultural and neighborhood activities as negotiated with your care provider.	To conduct yourself in a responsible and appropriate manner while participating in these activities.
To maintain confidentiality on all information in your record and your family's record.	To talk with your Children's Service Worker and care providers about what you consider confidential.
To have a permanent plan, which may be to return to your family, adoption, or placement in another permanent living arrangement.	To take part in developing your permanency plan. To commit yourself and take responsibility for your plan.
To receive prior notice, when possible of any placement changes.	To ask your Children's Service Worker or care provider to explain this if you do not understand.
To have regular (at least once monthly face-to-face) contact with your Children's Service Worker.	To keep scheduled appointments with your Children's Service Worker and discuss current problems openly. To phone your Children's Service Worker when you need to talk to her/him.

<i>Rights</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
To attend school.	To achieve as much as possible and not skip classes.
To make a formal (written) complaint about the services that you receive while you are in placement, if dissatisfied.	To be honest with your complaint - what happened, why it happened.
To have privacy. You have privacy to an extent, unless there is reason to believe that you may harm yourself or others.	To respect the privacy and property of others in your out-of-home care setting.
To receive the basic rights of food, clothing and shelter and to possess and take with you personal belongings.	To take care of your clothing and personal items.

In 2017, Missouri placed a Bill of Rights for youth in foster care into law with the passing of [SB160](#). The **Foster Care Bill of Rights** must be provided and explained to all school aged children in foster care. Posters must also be displayed in all CD offices, child placing agency offices, residential facilities, Chafee provider offices, and Transitional Living agency offices.

Here is what the Bill of Rights means:

- No matter what is going on, the safety and well-being of youth is the most important thing to the Children’s Division.
- The first goal of the Children’s Division is to keep families together. If a family isn’t able to stay together and children do enter into foster care, Children’s Division will make all efforts to reunite the family.
- At all times, Children’s Division will do their best to keep kids with people they know and trust.
- Children’s Division will do their best to keep kids in the same home as long as that’s what is best for them.
- The Children’s Division will work with each youth and family to develop goals and a plan to make sure youth are safe, their needs are met and that they keep the things and people that are important to them in their lives, both now and in the future.
- Family relationships are important. Children’s Division will make every effort to keep brothers and sisters in the same home as much as possible. Even when brothers and sisters aren’t able to live in the same home, Children’s Division will make sure they get to talk and visit with each other.
- Youth 12 years and older can choose to attend their court hearings. It’s Children’s Division’s responsibility to make it possible for those youth to attend their court hearings, when it is in the youth’s best interest. **Here is the actual Bill of Rights:**

Foster Care Bill of Rights

In all circumstances, the best interests of the child shall be the first priority of the Children's Division

Recognizing the importance of familial stability in foster care and adoption placement, it shall be the practice of the children's division, when appropriate, to support a child's return to the custody and care of the parents or guardians with whom the child resided immediately prior to state custody

When restoration of care and custody is not appropriate or possible, the Children's Division shall attempt to place the child with suitable relatives in accordance with section 210.565

The Children's Division shall further support familial stability by ensuring continuity of foster placement, except in instances where cause for a change in a child's placement is reasonably found

The Children's Division shall work with each child in state custody to develop both a permanency plan and a case plan. These plans shall be developed within twelve months of a child's entrance into state custody. The permanency plan shall include the child's immediate and long-term placement goals, while the case plan shall address a child's specific medical and emotional needs

Recognizing the value of familial relationships in foster care and adoption settings, it shall be the practice of the Children's Division to place siblings in the same foster care, kinship, guardianship, or adoptive placement, unless doing so would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. If siblings are not placed together, it shall be the practice of the children's division to support regular visitation and communication between siblings in state custody, and between children in state custody and their parents and relatives, where not otherwise prohibited or against a child's best interests

The Children's Division shall support all children twelve years of age or older in state custody to attend any hearings pertaining to the child's placement, custody, or care, provided that the child is willing and able to attend such hearings, and that attending such hearings is in the best interests of the child.



Rights and Responsibilities of Your Family

While you are in a placement, your family also has certain rights and responsibilities. The following are some of these, but not limited to just these:

- ❖ To help explain to you the reason for your placement.
- ❖ To be informed of and to participate in all case planning and permanency planning reviews and to know what changes are expected in order for you to return home.
- ❖ To work with Children's Division and/or Foster Care Case Management (FCCM) Agencies toward achieving a permanent plan for you and to be told of any changes being considered.
- ❖ To maintain contact with you through planned visits, phone calls and letters unless restricted by the court.
- ❖ To keep Children's Division/FCCM Agencies informed of their address, telephone, job, income, marriage, or other living arrangements and changes affecting members of your family.
- ❖ To give permission for your medical care.
- ❖ To provide financial support for your care according to Children's Division/FCCM or Court determination of their ability to pay.
- ❖ To be a part of your life through activities, such as transportation for visits and attendance at school conferences, unless restricted by the court.
- ❖ To give permission, if necessary, for you to travel out-of-state.
- ❖ To make a formal (written) complaint about the services they have received from Children's Division/FCCM Agency if dissatisfied.
- ❖ To have information about your health, special development, progress in school and behavior.
- ❖ To attend any court hearings involving you.
- ❖ To be represented by an attorney and request a hearing be held in juvenile court.

- ❖ To work toward your timely return home by making the necessary changes or correcting conditions which led to your placement and to receive every possible assistance and service from the agency in order to do this.

Rights and Responsibilities of Care Providers



Your care providers have been approved to provide care by Children's Division and have agreed to accept you into their home or facility. Listed below are some of their rights and responsibilities:

- ❖ To accept you and treat you with respect and dignity.
- ❖ To provide for your daily care including food, shelter, clothing, and personal care.
- ❖ To make reasonable decisions involving your participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities using the reasonable and prudent parent standard (decisions are characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a youth while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the youth).
- ❖ To guard the confidential nature of information about you.
- ❖ To help you achieve self-discipline in your home, school, and social life.
- ❖ To have regular contact with a Children's Division/FCCM Agency Children's Service Worker who will offer services as needed.
- ❖ To participate in permanency planning reviews and cooperate with Children's Division/FCCM Agencies by following the written case plan.
- ❖ To assist your Children's Service Worker by sharing information about you that is important in making plans for you.
- ❖ To help prepare you for leaving your placement and going to your next placement whether it is returning home, another placement, or independent living.

- ❖ To encourage you to work hard in school, allow you time to do your homework, and send you to school regularly, if you are enrolled.
- ❖ To help you deal with your feelings about being in placement.
- ❖ To support your case plan for visitation and relationship with your family.
- ❖ To assist you with your lifebook, a collection of personal mementoes, family and placement histories, and life and growth information.



Rules, Rules, Rules!

When you enter a placement, it is often a good idea to ask about rules, expectations, and routines. This will give you some idea of what to expect and can make you feel more comfortable. You'll probably have to get used to a whole new routine. It is also important to keep an open mind. Everyone understands that this may be a difficult transition for you. If you have a therapist, don't be afraid to use them as a resource. The important thing to remember is that people are available to help you when you have problems or concerns, but you can't get help if you don't talk about problems or concerns. And again, don't be afraid to ask questions!

No matter where you are or what you do, there are rules that you have to follow. As every family and living situation is different, the rules in your out-of-home placement will probably be different from the rules you have been used to following.

Family foster homes and group homes may set their own rules and consequences for breaking rules, as long as they are within Children's Division guidelines. Some rules may be stricter than others, but remember, nobody is picking on you. It is normal for you to want to set your own boundaries. Make sure they are reasonable and then share your suggestions with those caring for you.

Your care providers also make the day-to-day decisions about your activities, duties around the house, etc. However, your own family's wishes are considered, especially around issues such as religious participation. The care provider can ask you to attend religious functions, but they cannot force you to participate.

Out-of-home care providers are to follow the "reasonable and prudent parent standard" when determining whether to allow you to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. This means that the out-of-home care provider uses a standard to make decisions about "normal" activities using careful and sensible judgment that maintains your health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging your emotional and developmental growth. It means that the out-of-home care provider would base the decisions that are made regarding you as if you were their own child and that you are not held to a different standard because you are in foster care - you are treated like the care providers own children in the home. You may not like some of these decisions but if the reasonable and prudent parent standard is applied, then it is something that would be permitted as a parental decision. In some situations, these decisions will seem normal to you as a teenager while at other times you may think that they are not. For example, if you want to spend the night with a friend, your care provider may have some stipulations that they meet the family of your friend prior to you going over to spend the night. This would be considered "normal" and exercising "reasonable and prudent parenting". "Parents" want their children to be safe and have a right and responsibility to ensure that when they are not with them, that their children are safe. This all seems normal. However, if your case manager or other person on your planning team required a background check on the family prior to you spending the night, this would not be considered "normal" and would be cause to discuss the reasonable and prudent parent standard and how it applies to you. Your care provider should have the parental authority to make this type of decision for you acting on your best interests and safety. Another example is use of social media. Your care provider may require that you provide your passwords to them for any social media accounts. While you may not consider this normal because of privacy, when viewed from the lens of reasonable and prudent parenting, it is considered "normal" as the "parents" are looking out for your safety and well-being.

Children's Division expects all care providers to have rules. Rules are a form of discipline that teaches you self-control and consequences for behavior. However, discipline should never be abuse. Acts which cause pain, such as hitting, beating, shaking, tying, cursing, threatening, denial of meals, and degrading remarks about you or your family is not acceptable. You should not be verbally abused nor threatened to be expelled from the care provider's home. You are not allowed to discipline other children in your placements. Discipline from care providers should be used in a constructive, fair and consistent manner and physical punishment should not be used. If you have disciplinary concerns, it is important to discuss them with your Children's Service Worker.

Some of the rules.....



Smoking/Tobacco

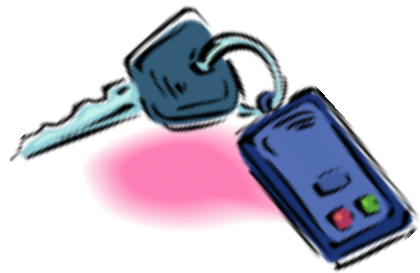
It is against the law for a person under 18 to smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco. Care providers are expected to prohibit youth in their care from smoking and/or chewing tobacco if under age. It is also against the law for an adult to purchase cigarettes and/or chewing tobacco for a person who is under the age of 18.

Haircuts

You should be able to express your desires regarding your hairstyle and changes you would like to make.

Driving

If you are of legal age to drive and want to get your license, talk to your Children's Service Worker before getting it. Youth in foster care have two options for purchasing liability insurance which is a requirement by Missouri law if you are to drive.



If you are able to purchase your own car, you must have written consent from the Children's Division. Missouri law allows youth 16 and older in Children's Division custody to contract for the purposes of automobile insurance with the consent of the Children's Division or Juvenile Court. This legislation applies to youth in foster care only. This legislation will benefit youth [who own a vehicle](#) - a co-signer is not needed. The youth is responsible for paying the costs of the insurance premiums and is liable for damages from an automobile accident.

If you do not own a car, an auto liability insurance policy to assist youth in foster care ages 16 and older, is available. The purpose of this special policy is to obtain

auto liability coverage for vehicles youth drive but do not own. It is available through a special endorsement through the Automobile Insurance Plan Servicing Organization (AIPSO) and its Governing Board.

This [non-owner coverage](#) is available to youth placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the Missouri Department of Social Services (Children's Division) has legal custody. With this program, a youth may purchase an auto policy in his/her own name which includes a specially developed form titled "Named Non-owner Coverage Youth in State Custody." The policy provides state required limits of liability and uninsured motorist coverage to the insured youth when driving any vehicle he or she does not own. The special endorsement, however, allows the youth's policy to respond to a claim when the youth is driving a caregiver's car differently than when driving a non-caregiver's car.



The Automobile Insurance Plan (AIP) is the market of last resort for consumers who need auto insurance but cannot find it through standard automobile insurance companies. The **Automobile Insurance Plan Servicing Organization** (AIPSO) is a non-profit management organization and service provider that administers the plan for Missouri and 48 other states and the District of Columbia.

Any agent licensed to write automobile insurance in the state can assist a qualified youth in obtaining insurance through the Missouri Automobile Insurance. Youth may also [contact the Plan online](#) or by calling 800-424-0026 for a list of producers/agents in their area who have submitted business to the Missouri Automobile Insurance Plan.

Employment



If you want to work, talk to your Children's Service Worker before starting your job. This is also due to laws in Missouri pertaining to minors and their legal abilities. Your job cannot interfere with school work, study periods, sleep, normal community contacts, or visits with your family. You will not be able to have a job in which you would have to operate dangerous

or hazardous equipment or machinery unless adequate safety equipment and proper adult supervision are provided due to laws in place to protect youth in the workplace. More information can be found at:

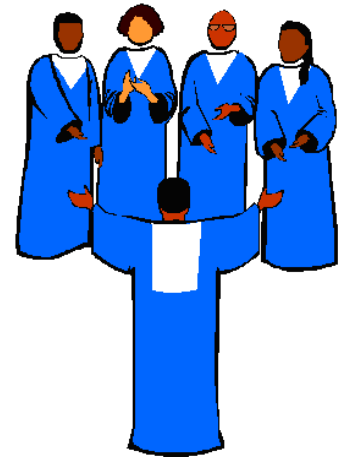
<http://labor.mo.gov/DLS/YouthEmployment/>

Body Piercing/Tattoos

Youth in out-of-home care must have written permission from their birth parents before having any type of tattoo or piercing including ears, unless they are 18 or older.

Religion

You are allowed to practice the religion of your choice as long as it is not injurious to your physical, mental or emotional health. Care providers are expected to offer the opportunity for religious education and attendance of services compatible with your heritage.



Social Networking



Because you are in foster care, your privacy and personal information needs to be respected and protected. Identifying information about you should not be shared on your foster family's social networking site such as Facebook. However, if you are comfortable with pictures of you being posted by your foster family in family activities, school events, and community functions, this is permissible. The fact that you are in foster care is protected information but being in foster care should not make you feel excluded as a member of the family. Social media sites can be used as part of the norm of everyday life in your foster home but the use of your photo on social media sites should not make you feel uncomfortable. If posting(s) make you uncomfortable, talk to your

foster family about this and if needed, discuss your concerns with your Children's Service Worker.

Foster parents are asked as part of their parental responsibilities to monitor your use of the internet while you are in their home. Remember to be safe and don't give any personal information to anyone you don't know or agree to meet someone that you meet on the internet.

For more online safety tips go to:

Federal Trade Commission:

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec14.shtm>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

<http://www.netsmartz.org/Teens>



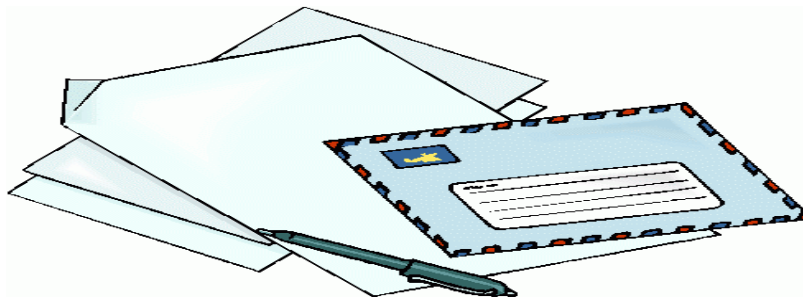
Phone Calls/Mail

Youth in out-of-home care are allowed to send/receive mail or have phone calls with friends, parents, grandparents, and other family members. Unless there is a court order stating otherwise, outgoing and incoming mail and private phone calls of persons who are served in any form of out-of-home care are not to be censored,

intercepted, or restricted and given to the addressee as soon as possible. However there may be occasion when someone involved with the youth, such as a therapist believe that sending/receiving mail or allowing private phone calls from certain parties would not be in the best interest of the youth. Some reasons that phone

restrictions might be in place include threatening comments, the conversation is sexually inappropriate, attempts to persuade youth to change his/her story, or calls inhibit the case plan or goal. Mail may not be restricted unless: authorized by the court, is being used for the purpose of breaking the law, suspected of containing illegal material, causes emotional and/or psychological harm. Care providers or Children's Division/Foster Care Case Management staff may not deprive a youth of incoming or outgoing mail, or family contact (i.e., telephone, visits) as a form of discipline.

It's important to communicate with your care providers to make sure you understand their expectations. A good way to do this is to complete a worksheet with the provider, which outlines the household rules and describes the consequences when rules are broken. A sample you can use for this activity can be found on the next page.



Sample

Household Rules Worksheet

Rule	Consequence
<i>The rules and consequences identified on this worksheet have been discussed and explained.</i>	
Care Provider: _____	Date: _____
Care Provider: _____	Date: _____
Youth: _____	Date: _____



Contacting Your Children's Service Worker

These examples aren't meant to tell you what to do in every situation, but they should give you some guidelines to follow in deciding when to contact your Children's Service Worker, and when to hold off. You won't get in trouble for contacting your Children's Service Worker, but these guidelines can help you be considerate of their busy schedules:

Important reasons to call your Children's Service Worker RIGHT NOW:

- Physical harm or threats going on in your foster home
- Sexual harassment or sexual abuse in your foster home, by a counselor, or at school
- Problems in your home that are so serious you are thinking of running away

If you can't reach your Children's Service Worker, ask to talk to someone else immediately. Tell them that it is a problem that can't wait. If no one answers, call 911 or the police. If you are being abused, you can also call the Child/Abuse Hotline at: 1-800-392-3738.

Other reasons to call:

- To find out information on your family or case plan
- To tell them about an award you've won (they do love to hear about your achievements!)
- To get additional money for new clothes or a special outfit you need
- To get copies of personal documents like a birth certificate or Social Security card.

Ask your foster parent before calling, leave a message for your Children's Service Worker or wait until your next regular visit. Once you have left foster care and are on your own, it is okay to call your old Children's Service Worker for information of any kind that related to your time in foster care.

Tips for the conversation:

- When you call, fully introduce yourself: "Hi, this is Joe Jones. I live with the Smiths. I was hoping that you could help me with a problem I'm having."
- If you get an answering machine or voicemail, you can leave the same message, but **BE SURE TO LEAVE YOUR NAME AND PHONE NUMBER**, otherwise, your Children's Service Worker will have to look it up. The easier you make it, the sooner you'll get called back.
- Speak clearly and slowly. Think about what you are going to say before you call so that your thoughts are organized when you are trying to explain your situation.



A tip to remember:

Give your Children's Service Worker a break. Children's Service Workers have very difficult jobs and must deal with tough problems all day long. Sometimes saying something nice like "I know you have a tough job and I really appreciate any help you can give me" is just the ticket to making a Children's Service Worker eager to help you out.

Retrieved from: <http://www.fosterclub.com>

When You Don't Think Something Is Fair

There are probably going to be times when you do not agree with how things are going. Sometimes you may not feel that your Children's Service Worker, your care provider, or your own parents are treating you fairly or listening to you. It is best if you are able to discuss these feelings with your Children's Service Worker or care provider and try to straighten out the problem. Talking it out is the easiest way to say what is on your mind. You may be angry and want to scream and shout and this is typical. However, people will be more likely to listen to what you have to



say, and to respond positively if you are calm and respectful, even if you are feeling angry or upset. If someone was upset with you, would you want them to holler and yell at you? Keep that in mind...

- If you have a serious problem or something that needs to be brought to attention, start with your *Children's Service Worker*.
- *Other people you can talk to: Guardian Ad Litem, Juvenile Officer, Foster Parent, Counselor, and Chafee Specialist.*
- You also have the right to confidential communication with your *Guardian Ad Litem* to discuss concerns regarding your situation. If you do not know the name of your *GAL*, ask your *Children's Service Worker* or contact your *Deputy Juvenile Officer* at the Court.
- Don't be afraid to ask to speak to your worker in private. This is your right.
- If nothing is resolved and things continue to be a problem, talk to the supervisor of your *Children's Service Worker*.
- If nothing is resolved and things continue to be a problem, talk to the *Circuit Manager*.
- If nothing is resolved and things continue to be a problem, talk to the *Field Support Manager*.
- If nothing is resolved and things continue to be a problem, talk to the *Regional Director*.
- (If you do not know who these are, ask anyone in your local office.) Numbers for each office in Missouri can be found at this link: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/office/>

Remember to follow the steps in place and to clearly state your need and expectations - what needs to change.

It is also sometimes helpful to put your thoughts in a letter. A letter is a powerful tool when you are trying to make a change about anything! It shows that you have gathered your thoughts and opinion, and that you can show your concern in a grown-up way. Make sure to include the exact problem, what you have done to fix it, what others have done to fix it and the results. Keep a copy for yourself and have patience.

Service Delivery Grievance Process

The Children's Division also has a service delivery grievance process that allows you to express any concerns you have about being treated unfairly or if you are dissatisfied with the agency's actions or behaviors. Any youth 12 or older may file a grievance. It is a three step process and is for Children's Division matters only, not for court issues, discrimination, or outcomes of Child Abuse/Neglect reports. This should be done only after all other efforts to resolve the issue have been taken.



All professionals working with youth are mandated reporters meaning that they are required by law and profession to report any concerns of abuse/neglect to the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline. However, anyone can call the hotline that has concerns for a child (under the age of 18) having been or being abused or neglected. The Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day. The number is: 1-800-392-373

Office of Child Advocate

There is also the Office of Child Advocate. The Office of Child Advocate is an office within the Office of Administration and is independent of the Department of Social Services (Children's Division) and other agencies. It was created for the purposes of assuring children receive adequate protection and care from service and programs offered by the Department of Social Services, the Department of Mental Health or the Juvenile Courts. They are an impartial fact-finder.

The Office of Child Advocate accepts and investigates complaints about an agency action or failure to act and is authorized to make recommendations in cases involving:

- ❖ Any child at risk of abuse, neglect, or other harm.
- ❖ A child or family involved with child protection or child welfare services.

The Office of Child Advocate has the right to review all records kept by the Children's Division but they will not disclose your identity to the agency without your permission.

Their telephone number is: 866-457-2302. They also have a website: <http://oca.mo.gov/>

Asking for Help

As you ask for help, remember a few tips when advocating for yourself. Most of all, remember that you have a right to ask for help.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ DO know that you have a right to ask for help.■ DO ask for help from an adult that you trust (Your Guardian Ad Litem, Chafee Specialist, Children's Service Worker, Counselor, Mentor, Advocate, Care Provider, or Friend).■ DO know that you have control over some things, even though it feels like everyone else has control. You can control:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Who you ask to help you■ Using the chain of command■ Speaking your truths■ DO be clear about:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ What's happening■ What's needed■ How you feel■ DO brainstorm different solutions and backup plans.■ DO be straightforward and truthful.■ DO be ready to negotiate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ DON'T feel like you are bothering people.■ DON'T hesitate to ask for help.■ DON'T think that you have no control.■ DON'T think that you have to go through this by yourself.■ DON'T think it is too late.■ DON'T start without thinking things through.■ DON'T use sarcasm or degrading language.■ DON'T swear or name call.■ DON'T prejudge people.■ DON'T ever, ever give up. |
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Retrieved from: <http://www.fosterclub.com>



Visitation

Children's Division staff should schedule a visit between you and your family within 72 hours of removal unless this contact is not in your best interest. This usually requires a court order to prevent visitation but may be done by the agreement of the Family Support Team/Permanency Planning Review Team. Visits may vary in length, frequency and location. Some may be supervised by the Children's Service Worker, care provider, parent, relative or other designated person. This means that your Children's Service Worker or another person agreed upon by the Family Support Team will be present during your visit. This is done to assure your safety and the appropriateness of the interaction between your family. When visits are supervised, your conversations must be loud enough for the person supervising the visit to hear what is being said - no writing notes or whispering. The visitation plan should be developed and then discussed at each FST/PPRT meeting.

Your Children's Service Worker will also be making visits to your home to discuss various issues regarding your progress and safety, case plan and any other treatment issues. Your Children's Service Worker should meet face-to-face, individually and jointly, with your care provider and you, at your placement, the next business day after you are placed there. Your Children's Service Worker must then meet face-to-face, individually and jointly, with your care provider and you a minimum of one time per month in your placement to monitor the placement and assess your safety and well-being. You should be seen separately from your care provider and together with your care provider during these visits.





Stuff to Do at Family Visits

A visit with your bio-parent or other visitor can be awkward, especially at first. Sometimes it helps to plan an activity. Having something fun to do can put people at ease and can make the visit less awkward.

Bring a board game or playing cards. If you are going to have your visit at the office, ask a Children's Service Worker if there are some games available.

Make a photo album or scrapbook. You can start a photo album or scrapbook and bring it to visits for your bio-family to work on together. In between visits, you can be collecting things to be included.



Work on your Lifebook. A lifebook is a collection of personal souvenirs and keepsakes, including information on your family and foster family history, your life experiences, and items that reflect who you are such as art pictures and school awards.

Create an address book. A good way to keep in touch is to write to your friends and relatives. Ask your family member to bring their address book so you can copy down addresses (be sure to get permission from your foster parent or Children's Service Worker before giving out your address).

Read a book. You might want to choose a book that both you and your bio-parents or siblings can be reading in between visits. It is nice knowing you and your family member are "sharing" in an activity even when you are apart. When you have a visit, you can discuss the book.



Make a family tree. It may not seem important now, but as time goes by, remembering who's who in your biological family may become more difficult. Use the time at your family visits to create a family tree, and then ask your Children's Service Worker to make copies.

Share a journal. You can start a daily journal in a plain notebook. When you do meet with your family members, you'll be able to tell them all that has happened between visits. It might be a nice idea if your family member kept a journal, too. Swap journals at each visit and pick up where the other person left off!

Show your schoolwork. Ask your Chafee Specialist to help you create a portfolio to keep copies of all your best schoolwork in. Bring it to your visits and show off your hard work. Your Children's Service Worker will love to see the progress you're making in school, too!



Share what you've learned from this book. Your bio-family might also have questions about foster care, and you might just be able to help them find the answers once you've read this book. Also, you can use this book to help express your feelings. If something has been bothering you and you've found it discussed in this book, mark the book and bring it to a visit. Show it to your visitors and maybe that can help to spark a discussion.

Retrieved from: <http://www.fosterclub.com>



YOUR RECORDS

You have the right to review information in your file if you are a youth in out-of-home care. If there are concerns regarding reviewing your record, your Children's Service Worker may seek guidance through supervisory channels. After you are no longer in care and are over the age of 18, you have a right to review information in any records while

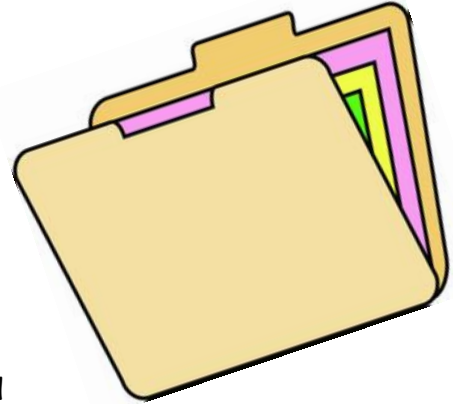
you were in care. When you are at least 18 and no longer in care, you may also have information from your parent's records for the time period that you received services prior to, during, and following placement. The Children's Division, per policy, has ten business days to prepare the file for review.

Supreme Court Rule 123.08 requires the Children's Division and the Juvenile Officer to provide access to records and information within specific time frames without a formal discovery request. Within ten (10) days of the protective custody hearing or within

fourteen (14) days of the filing of the petition or motion to modify, the Children's Division and Juvenile Officer must allow for certain records to be made available to all parties.

The records may include the following and should be relevant to the allegations in the petition:

- Medical records of the juvenile;
- Law enforcement records, including incident reports. If information regarding an active investigation is requested, CD staff should request permission from law enforcement to release the information. If law enforcement will not approve the release due to an active investigation, CD should notify all parties that the information cannot be released at this time;
- Written statements, videotapes, and audiotapes regarding the juvenile and or parents/guardians;
- Reports and affidavits submitted by the Children's Division to the juvenile office recommending protective custody or a petition to be filed;
- Completed CD reports and safety plans;
- Written service agreements; and
- Completed hotline reports, redacted as required by law. If the hotline report is not completed by the timeframes set forth in the initial court hearing, the report should be made available upon completion.



The Children's Division is not required to make copies of the information. Your Children's Service Worker may schedule an appointment for you to review your record. If you would like copies of the documents, you may provide a written or verbal request. If copies of the information above are requested, the Children's Division must follow the timeframes established in this rule. You may only receive one copy and any additional copies will be made at your expense.



Older Youth Program

Many youth in CD custody look forward to being “on their own” and yet are uncertain about what they are going to do when that day arrives.

It is never too early for any teen to begin thinking about the skills they need to live independently. For example, do you know how to fill out job applications or handle job interviews? Will you need additional education or training to reach your goals in life? Where can you get this education or training and how will you pay for it? Do you know how to rent an apartment, cook meals, or buy a car? Who would you call if you had a problem or needed someone to talk to?

The Older Youth Program provides life skill services to help prepare and transition youth to independence. Services are provided to all youth age fourteen (14) through twenty-one (21) in custody or previously in custody if leaving care after age 17.5. Youth, who after age 16 or older, leave foster care for adoption or guardianship, are also eligible to receive services. Assessment tools are used to develop individual case plans for youth to help assist with the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Assessment Tools



For youth age 14 and older, life skills assessments are completed as well as transition planning to provide the youth, youth’s caregiver, and Children’s Service Worker with information that will help the youth prepare for self-sufficiency. The assessment process helps in an understanding of the youth’s strengths and challenges so that practical, concrete efforts can be made to achieve the youth’s goals for transitioning from care.

The Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA)

(<http://www.caseylifeskills.org>) is a free online tool that assesses life skills youth need as they navigate high school, postsecondary education, employment and other life milestones. The tool is used to initiate a conversation regarding strengths and challenges, and assist with goals to be developed for the teaching of life skills.



The youth format contains items to measure self-reported skills, knowledge, and awareness. The caregiver format asks a parent or other adult to rate the youth in his/her care on the same set of information. The report will show the average score for each life skill area, including permanency, on a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 indicating high strength.

Your Children's Service Worker is to ensure that you take the CLSA. It is also to be taken by at least one caregiver of yours to gain a whole picture of your life skills accomplishments. More adults can complete the caregiver format, but it is important the adult completing the assessment is someone who knows you well.

While you are in care, you will complete this assessment on a yearly basis. If you have not taken it yearly, ask your Chafee Specialist or Transitional Living Provider to assist you with this. Being able to compare your results on at least a yearly basis provides a continuous picture of how well you are doing in learning life skills in preparation of transitioning from care.

The CLSA takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. The CLSA is completed electronically via the Internet, but copies can be printed from the CLSA web site at Casey Life Skills and taken by hand with the responses entered into the website at a later time.



The Adolescent Family Support Team (FST) Guide and Individualized Action Plan (IAP) is

a comprehensive document to guide team members through the Family Support Team process. This individualized plan will identify your specific team members, the identified individuals for your support system, long term goals for you and life skills assessment and continued evaluation. It is started in the first thirty days of a youth coming into care after the age of 14 or turning 14 and completed within 120 days and completed according to your age. Life skills assessments are evaluated by your Children's Service

Worker and specific plans are developed to address identified needs. This guide will be reviewed and updated by the Family Support Team at every team meeting for an accurate account of your current situation and will be a foundation for permanency recommendations. It is also presented at Permanency Planning Reviews in conjunction with the Child Assessment and Service Plan, CS-1. It is a living document that will be updated constantly throughout your time in care.

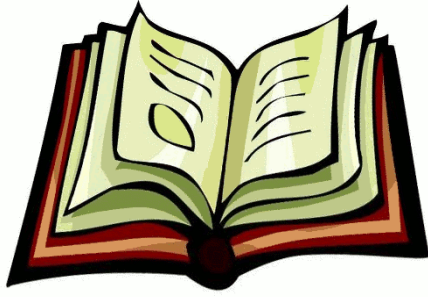
The learning goals and expectations/tasks provide the framework for life skills instruction. It is designed to help you acquire knowledge and understanding about a life skill and then apply the life skill to real life situations. The learning goal represents the overall goal for instruction, and the expectations/tasks describe what you should be able to do after instruction takes place. The learning goals will guide the work that your Chafee Specialists do with you.

Life Skills Strengths/Needs Assessment is

an interview style tool that your Children's Service Worker will use to identify your strengths and needs to assist in the planning process for your life skills teaching. The strengths/needs assessment is to help you develop rapport with your Children's Service Worker and for him or her to understand you better. The assessment covers nine life skill areas and provides a snapshot of where you are at right now. This tool is used to assist in determining what you want to work on (need statement) right now for goals in the Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan/Learning Plan. You should receive a copy of the completed form. This form is completed within the first 60 days of a youth turning 14 or coming into care after the age of 14. The form can also be completed again as you achieve your goals and need to set additional goals.



The Portfolio is a collection of samples that communicate your interests and give evidence of your talents. It is used to show others what you have accomplished, learned, or produced. The portfolio is created during life skills instruction and is guided by the goals on your Adolescent Family Support Team Guide and Individualized Action Plan. The portfolio process involves the appreciation and evaluation of one's work. Portfolio items are completed for each life skill that you are taught in which your goal is met. Examples of portfolio items include certificates of achievement, school reports, and resumes. Your Chafee Specialist should assist you in developing a portfolio.



A life book should be started for each youth within thirty days of out-of-home placement. The book will be something that you take with you when you leave your placement as it belongs to you. The life book may take various forms which could include a folder, binder, packet, picture album, scrapbook, box or a specially prepared book for a permanent record for you. A life book is meant to help form a link to your past. Through the collection of historical data, memorabilia, stories, and special events, the life book provides a picture of your life. Examples of things to be included in your life book include pictures, information about your siblings, biological family, and placements, religious information, and school information.

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program:

Your Children's Service Worker is responsible for ensuring that you receive the skills necessary to become self-sufficient upon release from custody. These services may include, but are not limited to: assistance in obtaining a high school diploma, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, training in budgeting and financial management skills, substance abuse prevention, and preventive health activities (including smoking avoidance, nutrition education, and pregnancy prevention) and personal and emotional support through mentors. Youth, ages 14-21, in the legal custody of the Division and in out-of-home placement are to be referred for Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Services, regardless of their case plan. Youth, who after age 16 or older, leave foster care for adoption or guardianship, are also eligible for Chafee Services.



Part of being an advocate for yourself and others is being informed and educated. Attend your Family Support Team Meetings, Permanency Planning Reviews, and Court Hearings. Ask to speak to the judge at court. Tell your Children's Service Worker you want to be present at your FST's and if not in person by phone. If you have not had a FST meeting, ask your Children's Service Worker to schedule one ASAP. Ask when your next court date is.

Memos regarding policy and practice are available to you at any time at this link: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/memos/>. If you are wondering about something, research the Child Welfare Manual. It addresses numerous things regarding foster

parents, clothing allowances, court, records, etc. Section 4, Chapter 21 is specific to Older Youth and is a good starting place: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/info/cwmanual/> . If you have access to Facebook, Missouri's Older Youth Program has a page. Search "Missouri's Older Youth Program" and like the page. The Children's Division website also has resources for Older Youth: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/>

Voting

When you turn 18, you can register to vote. A vote is your voice in things that affect you and your community on a local, state, and national level.

For your voice to be heard, you must register to vote and exercise this right. Our elected officials determine much concerning our quality of life: taxes, economic regulation, and the educational system. Don't let someone else choose your elected officials for you. The biggest election issues often directly affect the youth and will impact life for years to come. The only way democracy works is if citizens, young and old, are active participants. Voting is a responsibility.



Information on how to do this can be found at this website:

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Voting/Register.shtml>



Clothing Allowances

When you first come into care your Children's Service Worker and care provider will help you determine what your clothing needs are. You are entitled to adequate seasonal clothing while you are in care.

If you are in need of clothing at the time you are placed, you will be able to receive up to \$480.00 in a clothing allowance. Your Children's Service Worker can provide you with a list of stores that will accept your clothing letter. If you use a clothing letter, your clothes will be tax exempt allowing you to have more money that you would normally use on taxes. Your care provider or Children's Service Worker will go with you if using a voucher. Another option is to purchase the clothes yourself and save the receipts. The State will reimburse you for your expenses however your items will not be tax-free - talk to your Children's Service Worker about this option before making any purchases. Receipts can be from a retail store, thrift store, or garage sale. Only clothes can be purchased with the allowance.

While your opinion about what type of clothes you wish to wear is important and should be considered, remember that your care provider has to keep in mind the cost of each item and how many different clothing items you will need. If you want additional clothing, you may be able to buy it with money you earn or your family may be able to help. Some youth like to buy good used clothing to make their dollars go further. You are responsible for maintaining/taking good care of your clothing once it has been purchased.

If you stay in care, you will be entitled to an annual clothing allowance of \$480.00 if you are case-managed by the Children's Division. If you are case-managed by a contracted Foster Care Case Management Agency, this amount will vary. You will receive this amount on the "anniversary date" of the month and day you entered care. You may choose to spend a partial amount and save the rest for purchasing clothing later in the year.

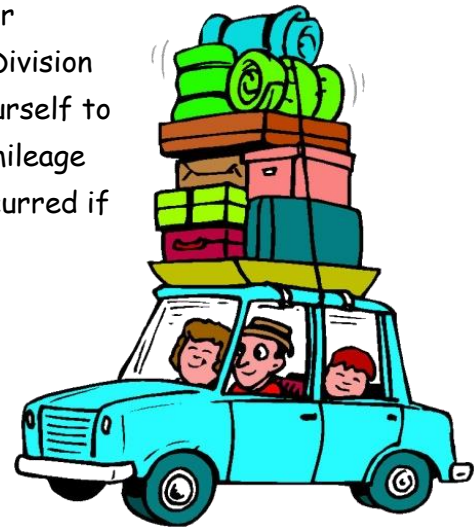
TIP: Mark your clothing and personal items with your name using a permanent marker.

Your clothing and personal belongings should always go with you when you leave a placement. Make sure these are documented in the Adolescent Family Support Team Guide.

Travel Expenses

If you are a youth in an Independent Living Arrangement or Transitional Living Advocate home through the Children's Division and have a car or have access to a car, if you transport yourself to some activities you may be reimbursed the current state mileage rate if submitted within 30 days of the month the trip occurred if the trip is for the purpose of:

- Medical care
- Counseling
- School of Origin
- Visits with parent(s) and siblings
- Court
- FST and PPR meetings
- Other as approved by the FST and/or case manager and supervisor to support the case plan



Youth must complete a Transportation Expense Log, CD-16 which can be given to you by your Children's Service Worker. You can only be reimbursed if the trip is over 15 miles round trip. If the trip will be over 75 miles round trip, you will need special approval in writing from your local office prior to traveling.

If you are in another type of living arrangement, your care provider should ensure that you are taken to activities that support your case plan and meet your needs.

KIDS Account - Children's Income Disbursement System



Some youth who come into out-of-home care have an independent source of income such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans Affairs, Railroad benefits, child support, lump sum payments and inheritance. This money must be used to provide for your care per the law and does not go directly to you. It is to be used on your care prior to any state and federal funds being used. It does not include any income you earn from working or other personal income you have such as scholarships.

Once an account is established, called the "KIDS" account, the money received from these sources is deposited into it. **If no income is being received for you, then there will be no account.** Your expenses are paid from this account such as the maintenance paid to your care provider, your health insurance expenses, counseling expenses, and clothing allowances.

At age 16, a savings of the money deposited will begin to accrue up to \$999.00 to assist you when you leave care. However, if you leave care prior to age 16, any debt that could have been paid the previous five years from this account but was not, will be recouped (taking money that the state previously spent and paying the fund sources back from where the money came) which may leave the account without any money. If you leave care after 16 but prior to living on your own, the funds will be released to your guardian. These funds will not be used to pay for expenses which previously had been paid from the KIDS account if you are eligible for federal and state funding for foster care.



The maximum amount that can be in this account and allow you to still be eligible for program benefits from the state such as foster care maintenance, medical coverage and SSI benefits is \$10,000. The maximum amount that you can have and still be eligible for SSI is \$2000. If you are close to or are exceeding the resource limit which makes you

eligible for these programs, your funds will be recouped so that you remain eligible. If after funds have been recouped, and there is a need to reduce the balance, special purchases may be made such as school supplies, additional clothing, computer, furniture, and tutorial services. Items must be specific for the youth and will be approved by your Family Support Team. If you are still in care at age 18 and receiving support through OASDI, unless you are not capable per the Court, you will become the payee of these funds but will have to apply to have the funds sent to you. You will want to do this timely. To ensure continuation of funding, you should schedule an appointment prior to leaving care by contacting the Social Security Administration office. You can learn more at <https://www.ssa.gov/>.

Having an independent source of income, and thus a KIDS account, does not give you an advantage over other youth except for two instances: (1) if your income exceeds your cost of care and your Children's Service Worker has been notified that you must spend some of the accumulated money, and (2) when you leave care and are able to receive the maximum savings that has been saved for you. Make sure you talk to your Children's Service Worker to see what funds you may have available and he/she can help you access them upon your release from care.

Here's to Your Health- Physical and Emotional Wellness



MO Healthnet (MH) and MH Managed Care

If you are in the state's out-of-home care system you are eligible for physical and behavioral healthcare services. Your healthcare provider is based on your physical location. Your physical healthcare will be provided through a Managed Care plan; and your behavioral healthcare and prescriptions will be provided through MO HealthNet. Other services may be available through community resources (i.e. the Health Department).

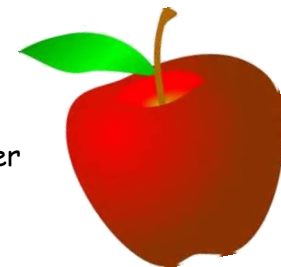


Your placement provider and/or Children's Service Worker will assign you to a managed care plan within 90 days of when you come into out-of-home care that will best meet your needs. There are several health plans offered through this program and each plan is made up of doctors, hospitals, and clinics. A Primary Care Physician will be chosen from your health plan, who will become your personal physician. Once you have been enrolled in a plan, your placement provider will receive a managed care identification card for you, which will be taken with you when getting any medical services. You will also be sent a handbook which will inform you all about their benefits. Please read it carefully and keep it in a safe place. If there are questions about your benefits, you (depending on your age and living arrangement) or your care provider can call the health plan.

Youth covered under MO HealthNet Managed Care choose a Primary Care Physician (PCP). The PCP may be a doctor, nurse practitioner or a clinic in your MH Managed Care health plan. If you have a chronic illness, their PCP may be a specialist. If you get sick, the first call must be to your Primary Care Physician unless it is a true emergency. In an emergency, you do not need to call your PCP first. Go to the nearest hospital or call 911. If you need a specialist, the PCP must refer you.

You will receive a MO HealthNet identification card that authorizes you to obtain behavioral health care needs and prescriptions. If you would like to have your own MO Health Net insurance card to carry with you, ask your Children's Service Worker to request this for you.

Many people think MO HealthNet pays for all health care. This is not true. MO HealthNet does not pay for some care and has limits on some care. Make sure the doctor accepts MO HealthNet payments before using them. Your medical coverage entitles you to receive routine medical care, hospitalizations, eye care, hearing tests, dental services and counseling. It also includes a complete yearly physical examination. If you have special needs, you should talk to your Children's Service Worker and/or care provider to make them aware of those needs. For medical needs not routinely covered under MO HealthNet or Managed Care, contact your Children's Service Worker about "special expenses."



Within 30 days after you are first placed in Children's Division custody, by law you must have a full Healthy Children and Youth assessment including eye, hearing, and dental exams; alcohol and drug screenings; developmental screening; and mental health screening. These screenings are done through interviews, observation and testing. If possible, this assessment is completed by the physician who knows you and your medical history.



Yearly dental exams are required for all youth in out-of-home care. Your MO HealthNet (MH) or MO HealthNet Managed Care (MHMC) provider will need to be contacted to obtain this service. If a special medical need arises, your Children's Service Worker or MH or MHMC provider will need to be contacted.

In some cases, youth in care are evaluated or seen by a psychiatrist. This may be because they are having a hard time coping with abuse or other traumatic experience or they may have a mental illness that requires medication, such as an anxiety or mood disorder.

It doesn't mean you are crazy if you need to take medication! Medications are used to help with various conditions such as Attention-Deficit Disorder to sleeplessness. These medications are prescribed only to help you, not to harm you in anyway.

It is crucial to take medications as they are prescribed for your condition. Psychiatrists are well-trained professionals who are fully capable of choosing the proper treatment for your condition. Let your psychiatrist or care provider know if there are any side effects that you have difficulty with. It is never a good idea to stop taking your medications without a doctor's approval. This could stop your progress in your treatment or even make your condition worse. Taking your medication properly makes a great difference in your health and state of mind. If you have been diagnosed with any illness, your medication is your key to stability and well-being.

It's recommended that you become familiar with the medicines that you have been prescribed. Ask your psychiatrist what a particular medicine will do for you, how it works, and what side effects to expect while you are taking it. If you feel that a certain medication is not right for you, you can request that your psychiatrist change your medication.



Youth who make the decision to have sexual relations will be at risk for pregnancy, AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). There are many community resources, including the public health department that can assist you with prevention information on sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and pregnancy. If services are needed to treat any of these conditions, MO HealthNet and Managed Care will cover the cost of medical care.

If you already have health insurance or obtain health insurance from another source such as employment, you must use this health insurance before using MO HealthNet and let your provider of medical/behavioral services know that you are also eligible for MO HealthNet/Managed Care.



If you leave Missouri, and you are a full-time student in another state, or you are on a visit to another state, MO HealthNet services may still be available. It is suggested you apply for healthcare coverage in the state you are residing in. You may only receive this coverage in one state so if you apply and receive assistance in your new state of residence, you can no longer use MO Healthnet until you return to Missouri and close that state's coverage out.

MO HealthNet's care coverage is also available to eligible youth age 18-26. If you leave foster care after your 18th birthday and you are not yet 26, you are automatically enrolled in MO HealthNet and do not have to be receiving any other services or meet any income guidelines to be covered. This means that you have guaranteed medical and behavioral health care coverage through MO HealthNet. In order to receive your card, provide your local Children's Division office with your current address information and request a MO HealthNet card.

FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care offers this advice:

Step 1: Know what you are taking (and why)

It is extremely important that you understand what medication(s) you are taking and their side effects (both short and long-term).

Step 2: Explore other treatments with your doctor

There may be alternative treatments available that are safe and effective with fewer side effects. Do not be afraid to ask questions and do your homework before visiting the doctor's office.

Step 3: Keep a log

Keep a list of medications you are taking and the date you started taking them. Keep track of things you notice in your body (more tired than usual, dizziness, etc.) and changes in your behavior and thoughts.



Step 4: Follow up with your doctor

Most doctors and therapists will appreciate a young person taking an interest in their own health and will be happy to answer questions.

(Retrieved from: <http://www.fosterclub.com/topics/psychotropic-drugs>)



Education

Foster Care Education Bill of Rights

The “**Foster Care Education Bill of Rights**” requires public school districts and child-placing agencies to ensure youth in foster care do not fall through the cracks when it comes to receiving an education because of situations that they experience while in care. The Foster Care Education Bill of Rights:

- Requires school districts to designate a staff person as the educational liaison for foster children. The liaison shall do the following in an advisory capacity:
 - ✓ Ensure and facilitate the proper educational placement, enrollment in school and checkout from school of foster children;
 - ✓ Assist foster care pupils when transferring schools by ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades;
 - ✓ Request school records within two business days of a foster child in a school; and
 - ✓ Submit records of a foster child within three business days of receiving a request for school records.
- Requires child-placing agencies to promote educational stability by considering the child's school attendance when making placement decisions. The foster care pupil shall have the right to remain enrolled in and attend his or her school of origin pending resolution of school placement disputes (HB154) or return to a previously attended school in an adjacent district (SB291).

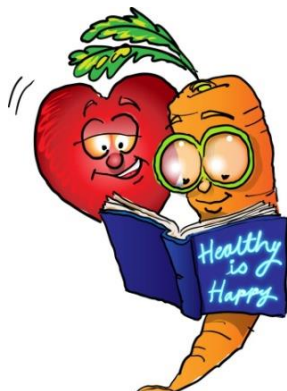
- Provides that each school district shall accept for full or partial credit course work satisfactorily completed by a pupil attending public school or nonsectarian school according to district policy.
- Provides that if a pupil completes graduation requirements while under juvenile court jurisdiction the district shall issue the pupil a diploma from the school the pupil last attended.
- Prohibits the school district from lowering the grade of a foster child if the child is absent from school due to a change in placement or due to a court appearance, (which would include PPRT and FST meetings). Grades and credits shall be calculated as of the date the pupil left school.
- Gives school districts the authority to authorize access of a pupil's school records to any child placing agency to fulfill educational case management requirements.

Additional information can be found at this link:

<http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills091/billpdf/truly/HB0154T.PDF>

Educational Stability

Educational stability should be a priority when assessing youth's placement needs and Children's Service Workers, along with local school districts, should work together to ensure youth remain in the school they are enrolled in at the time of placement into foster care and at each placement change. When remaining in the same school district is not in the best interest of the youth, Children's Service Workers should work with local school districts to ensure children are allowed immediate enrollment into a new school with all educational records provided to the new school.

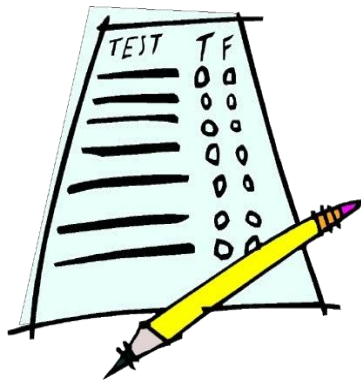


Free Nutritional Food Access

By law (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Public Law 111-296), youth in foster care are eligible for free school meals without completing an application. The Children's Division needs to provide the school documentation indicating you are a youth in foster care whose placement is the responsibility of the State.

Individualized Education Plan

Youth with special needs may be entitled to an Individualized Education Plan in their school. This is based on an identified need and evaluation. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures youth with disabilities receive individualized supports and services to successfully complete high school and transition to post-secondary education, employment, and adult life. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) establishes formation of concrete goals with measurable outcomes based on each individual's future plans. At age 14 the plan must address what instruction will assist the youth to prepare for transition. By age 16 the IEP must state what transition services the child needs, and specify interagency responsibilities or necessary connections. For more information: <http://dese.mo.gov/special-education/compliance>



High School Equivalency (HiSET)

Many people who did not finish high school have knowledge and skills comparable to people who did graduate. If you want to pursue a rewarding career or continue your education, then getting your high school credential is the most important step you can take. Colleges as well as many employers require one. The *HiSET*® exam can help you achieve this important state-issued high school equivalency credential.

The cost of the test is \$95, which includes a \$60 registration fee for the cost of the test and \$7 for each of the five test sections to cover the costs of administering the test. Because examinees do not have to complete the entire test at one time, they can take the test in sections. With the HiSET exam test fee, you'll get free test prep and two free retests within 12 months of your original purchase when you buy the battery (all five HiSET subtests).

The \$60 registration fee will allow individuals to test three times during a 12-month period. Examinees who do not pass the test the first time can retake the entire test or any of the test sections two more times within the 12-month period by paying an additional \$7-per-section fee.

Your skills and knowledge are measured in five core areas that make up the five HiSET subtests:

- ❖ Language Arts - Reading
- ❖ Language Arts - Writing
- ❖ Mathematics
- ❖ Science
- ❖ Social Studies



Each of the five subtests in the HiSET battery is scored on a scale of 1-20. In order to pass you must do all three of the following:

- ❖ Achieve a score of at least 8 on each of the five individual subtests
- ❖ Score at least 2 out of 6 on the essay portion of the writing test
- ❖ Have a total combined score on all five subtests of at least 45

Under no circumstances can you pass with a total score lower than 45 on the battery.

Only 16-year-olds who have successfully completed 16 units of credit toward high school graduation and have written permission from the superintendent or principal of the school last attended reflecting compliance are eligible to test. If homeschooled, only those 16-year-olds who have met the requirements of [Section 167.031 RSMO](#) for course instruction and have written permission of the parent or legal guardian indicating compliance, are eligible. Seventeen year-olds who have dropped out of school may take the test.

You must be a Missouri resident and you must present identification on test day at the HiSET test center. A valid permanent or temporary Missouri license (Driver, Nondriver, Intermediate, Commercial or Instruction (learners) permit), U.S. passport, or U.S. military ID. Outdated or expired identification will not be accepted.

For more information about obtaining a high school equivalency certificate, visit <https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/high-school-equivalency> or call 573-751-3504.

ACT

The ACT is a national college admissions exam that tests in English, math, reading, and science. The ACT results are accepted by all 4-year colleges and universities in the United States.

Most colleges and universities require this prior to admission and your score can be used for some scholarships as well as determining your acceptance into the school of your choice. Youth in foster care are eligible to take the ACT for free. Information can be found at this link: <http://www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html>



Financial Assistance for Higher Education

FAFSA

If you are in your senior year of high school and or already graduated and want to go to college, apply for federal financial aid by completing the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). Since you are in foster care, you can mark yourself down as a one-person family which will help you to receive the most financial aid available. You can find more information at this link: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>



Education and Training Voucher (ETV)

The ETV Program allows the Children's Division to provide post-secondary education and training funds to help eligible youth interested in pursuing a higher education to reach their goals. Those eligible for ETVs include:

- ❖ Youth currently eligible for Chafee services; and
- ❖ Youth who were adopted or obtained legal guardianship from foster care after their 16th birthday;

Additionally:

- ❖ Youth participating in a higher education program on their 21st birthday shall remain eligible until age 23, provided they are making satisfactory progress;
- ❖ Youth must have a high school diploma or equivalent;
- ❖ Youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a "C" average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in a training program;
- ❖ Youth must be accepted to an accredited or pre-accredited public or non-profit college/university and vocational school or certified training program;
- ❖ Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized; and
- ❖ There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program.
- ❖ Personal assets (bank account, car, home, etc.) are not worth more than \$10,000.
- ❖ Youth must be aged 18, 19, or 20 when first applying to the ETV Program.

Youth may receive up to \$5,000 per year or the total "cost of attendance". The cost of attendance includes:

- ❖ Tuition and fees.
- ❖ Room and Board for former foster youth who left care at age 18 or after but have not reached age 21. Room and Board assistance may also be available to eligible youth 21-23 if they are enrolled full-time in a post-secondary educational or training program.
- ❖ Rental or purchase of required equipment, materials or supplies (including a computer).
- ❖ Allowance for books, supplies, transportation, etc.; and
- ❖ Special study projects.

Eligible youth may apply for post-secondary education/training assistance by completing the application online at <http://www.fc2sprograms.org/missouri/> and submitting the required forms:



- ❖ ETV Student Cashier Statement;
- ❖ ETV Financial Aid Release Form;
- ❖ Federal Financial Student Aid Application (FASFA)

All applicants must have an active e-mail account which can be created for free through the ETV website. ETV assistance will be reviewed and made on a semester basis. Students must reapply online for every new school year. Every term, they must complete and submit a new Financial Aid Release Forms and Cashier Statements.

Older Youth Transition Specialists assist with eligibility determination once a student has applied on-line.

Missouri Reach: *Money for college is within your reach.*

During the 2009 legislative session, the general assembly placed tuition and fee waivers into statute for certain foster care students per [173.270, RSMo](#)). In the last couple of legislative sessions, money has been provided to support the legislation.

Tuition waivers and fees are available to eligible youth on a tiered priority basis. Implementation of this program is in partnership with the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE).

Priority is given to:

- ❖ Those youth not otherwise eligible for Educational Training Vouchers (ETV).
- ❖ Students adopted from Children's Division after the age of 14.
- ❖ Those youth who have at least 60 hours of college credit.



Foster Care to Success, a national non-profit organization, provides administrative services for the tuition waiver program. In order to apply, youth must go to <http://www.fc2sprograms.org/missouri/> and complete the online application. Older Youth Transition Specialists will verify eligibility once application is made. The Missouri Department of Higher Education will approve applications based on the priority criteria. Youth eligible and accepted will be notified as funding is available on behalf of MDHE.

Foster Care to Success will process the applications once accepted by reviewing the applicants' transcripts to determine academic standing, confirming the applicants' tuition and fees with the college or university, and working with students to develop a community service action plan that will be verifiable and outcome based.



Youth who meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to make application.

MDHE has established the following types of community service and public internships that youth may participate in to meet this requirement:

- ❖ Volunteering with a non-profit community service organization
- ❖ Community service club activities (not meetings)
- ❖ Campus coordinated community service projects include unpaid practicum and internships as well as philanthropic activities conducted by student service organizations
- ❖ Institutional and community sustainability projects
- ❖ Volunteering at a hospital, convalescent home, or group home for youth in foster care
- ❖ Unpaid peer mentoring or tutoring programs, both on- and off-campus
- ❖ Weekend campus clean-up, beautification activities
- ❖ Helping with a community team such as AYSO soccer or Little League (helping with sports events of younger children, refereeing, etc.)
- ❖ Volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, locally or abroad



- ❖ Unpaid internships with a local, state or federal agencies

The following are not considered appropriate for community service:

- ❖ Work often done by office, teacher or library student aides
- ❖ Service performed for a profit-making organization
- ❖ Service accomplished without obtaining prior approval
- ❖ Activities usually considered normal extracurricular (or co-curricular) activities,
- ❖ Service performed by a student for a family member or in instances where the family member supervises the service
- ❖ Service related to a class, credit for a class or the making of profit, defraying costs of trips, etc.
- ❖ Pay is received for the service rendered



Institutions of Higher Education the youth attends will monitor compliance and report it to MDHE. Once a youth is approved for the tuition waiver, continued participation in the program will be determined by academic standing, community service participation, and funding of the program.

CCE:

The Missouri Reach Credential Completion and Employment (CCE) is a short-term, targeted assistance program to help youth successfully pursue an education or training pathway that leads to a recognized credential and entry into the workforce.

- Eligible youth are currently in care, exited care after age 17.5, or obtained legal guardianship or adoption after age 14.
- Youth ages 19 - 25 are eligible (the credential must be earned by 26th birthday).
- Program participation is limited to 12 months - including pre- and post-training time - of comprehensive support and funding that leads to credential completion.
- The credential must be earned in less than 9 months.
- The maximum award amount is \$8,000 over a 12-month period.

- CCE participants **are not simultaneously** receiving:
 - postsecondary funding from ETV or Missouri Reach Tuition Waiver, or
 - other (specific) public education and training funding (i.e. workforce stipend). Exceptions may be approved by the Older Youth Program Development Specialist or Older Youth Transition Specialist in cases of documented need or extenuating circumstances.
- Participants may be in a no-cost Workforce Program but need living assistance - 3rd party rent payments, gas cards, etc. (less than 25% of funding will be given to program participants.)
- If youth needs 15 credits or less to earn a Bachelors or Associates and has expended all federal and state higher education funding (such as PELL & ETV) MO CCE funds may be used to pay tuition, fees and buy books.
- Participants must complete a skills and abilities aptitude test, phone-meet weekly with their FC2S navigator and build an online success profile (record personal and training goals and accomplishments).
- All applicants will be screened to determine if they are in default of federal student loans and coached to enter into a loan repayment plan, this is a program requirement for participants.

In order to apply, youth must go to <http://www.fc2sprograms.org/missouri/> and complete the online application. Older Youth Transition Specialists will verify eligibility once application is made.

Additional Resources:

Choose the right school:	http://collegesearch.mo.gov/ http://dhe.mo.gov/public-and-independent-colleges.php www.technical-vocational-schools.com
Look for Scholarships:	www.fastweb.com http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/grants/
Plan, apply and pay for college:	http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/

Post-Secondary Visit



Youth who are age 15 or older are entitled to a visit to a state university, community or technical college, or an armed services recruiter before being adopted or exiting to independence. The visit should include an entry application process, financial support application and availability, career options with academic or technical training, a campus tour, and other information and experience desired by you. The visit can be waived by your Family Support Team.

Youth Leadership:



Nothing About Us Without Us

Leadership opportunities are an important life skill and should be given to all youth in care. There are many ways that you can get involved on a local or state level. Youth leaders are needed to participate in speaking engagements for training, as part of a panel

at conferences/seminars, or as a youth representative in a workgroup or committee.

The Children's Division sponsors a Youth and Adult Empowerment and Leadership Conference every other year for youth across the state. The conference is planned and facilitated by members of the State Youth Advisory Board.

Child Advocacy Day is an annual event held in Jefferson City in the spring in which youth leaders from across the state participate. It is an opportunity for youth leaders to become better informed about children's legislation that is coming up before the Missouri General Assembly, and to share their views with their legislators on key issues important to youth in foster care.

Each region in the state has a local youth advisory board. Leadership boards are a way for you to communicate your thoughts and feelings on issues that are important to you regarding foster care. Regional boards meet every quarter in a geographically central region.

If you would like to get involved in any of these activities, speak to your Children's Service Worker or Chafee Specialist.



State Youth Advisory Board

The Missouri State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) was established December 1992. The SYAB meets on a quarterly basis. Each member of the board is an outstanding youth in foster care or youth that obtained adoption or guardianship after the age of sixteen that represents other youth in his/her area of the state. There are seven areas represented with up to four (4) youth who are nominated at their local level to serve on the SYAB to assure that SYAB members are equally representing their specific area as related to geographical size. The board also may consist of three non-voting, ex-officio members. Ex-officio members must be a current or former foster care youth who has served at least a one-year term as a board member or alternate, within the last three years.

Recognizing that each SYAB member represents all children and youth who are/were in out-of-home placements, each SYAB member is responsible for providing Children's Services' policy and procedural input to CD administrative staff/Juvenile Court. The SYAB decides what goals and activities they want to pursue for upcoming meetings and carry those out accordingly. The SYAB also works as a network by bringing back important information to the Area Youth Advisory Board (AYAB) or other area youth leadership community, who in turn, takes information back to youth in their area. When recommended to serve on the SYAB, the membership term is one year, however, once a member; there are guidelines to follow in order to continue membership.

- View the [SYAB Handbook](#)
[printable version](#) in PDF format

If you want to get involved in advocating for youth as well as meeting other youth from your area or across the state, talk to your Children's Service Worker or your Chafee Specialist.



NYTD *(National Youth in Transition Database)*

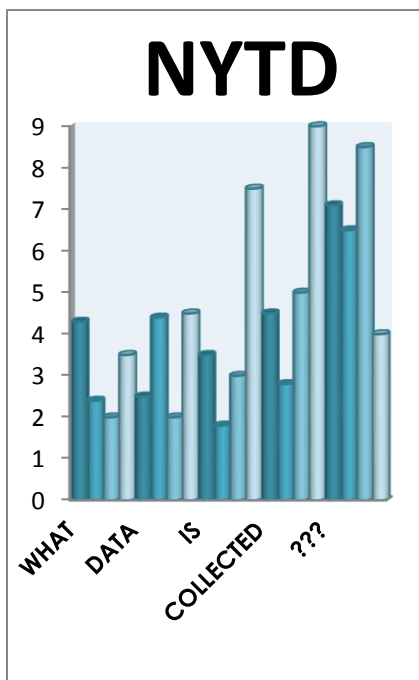
When you turn 17, 19, or 21 you may be asked to participate in a survey to improve services for older youth.

What is NYTD?

In 1999, Congress established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP). This program gives States flexible funding to assist youth in transitioning out of foster care. The law also requires the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop a data collection system to track the independent living services provided to youth and to develop outcomes that measure states' success in preparing youth for their transition from foster care to independent living. To meet this requirement, the National Youth in Transition Database, or NYTD, was created.

What data is collected?

States are asked to report the Independent Living services provided to all youth in thirteen broad categories:



1. independent living needs assessment
2. supervised independent living
3. post-secondary educational support
4. career preparation
5. employment programs or vocational training
6. mentoring
7. housing education and home management training
8. education financial assistance
9. budget and financial management
10. health education and risk prevention
11. family support and healthy marriage education;
12. academic support
13. room and board financial assistance

States are expected to survey certain youth at ages 17, 19 and 21 about the following outcomes:

- ❖ Increase youth financial self-sufficiency.
- ❖ Improve youth educational attainment.
- ❖ Increase youth connections with adults.
- ❖ Reduce homelessness among youth.
- ❖ Reduce high-risk behavior among youth.
- ❖ Improve youth access to health insurance.



What happens if States don't collect the data?

States are required to get at least 80% of youth in foster care and at least 60% of youth who have left care to participate in the youth outcomes survey. If States do not comply with (or meet) the data standards, they can be penalized between one and five percent of their annual Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allotment.



Why should you be involved?

This is your chance to make sure that Independent Living services and outcomes for youth in your state are counted. Your involvement in NYTD will encourage your peers to participate, positively impact your own life, and, ultimately, improve services for younger youth in your state. We know that the outcomes of many youth who leave care are not always that positive. By participating and being active with NYTD, you can help change those outcomes.

Get involved with NYTD and complete the survey when asked





Health Care Treatment Decisions

When you turn 18.....

You are required by law (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Acts -HR 3590) to receive information about the importance of choosing a person to make health care treatment decisions for you should you become unable to do so and you do not have or want a relative who by law can make those decisions for you. If you do not have, or do not want, a relative who by law can make those decisions for you, you have the ability to choose the person you would like to represent you in these decisions by completing a healthcare directive.

Planning for healthcare in advance of needing it and making a decision regarding your wishes can make a big difference in an emergency situation or when facing end of life decisions. There are a number of things you should think about to see if a health care directive is right for you:

- Your values, religious beliefs and preferences regarding illness
- Your thoughts on medicine and dying
- Who you would want to be a decision maker for you if you are unable to make decisions or speak on your own behalf.

Many people have strong ideas about the ways they wish to face death but may not make their choices known to those in their life. Reflection and planning while healthy is one way to ensure your voice is heard in decisions about your future healthcare. Another way of making your wishes known is to communicate your wishes to others.

A healthcare directive is a simple document that allows you to name someone you know and trust to make healthcare decisions for you if, for any reason and at any time, you become unable to make or communicate those decisions. It is an important document because it concerns not only the choices you make about your healthcare, but also the relationships

that you have with people and it helps you to make clear your wishes on healthcare treatment.

You are encouraged to talk to your *Guardian Ad Litem*, parent/permanent connection, spiritual advisor, trusted friend or other person important to you about whether or not you want to sign a healthcare directive. This is a personal decision for you.

In Missouri, a Durable Power of Attorney can help you if you are 18 years of age or older. If you decide to complete the form, give a copy of it to your family, close friends, doctor, lawyer, clergyman or anyone that may be asked to make decisions concerning your healthcare if you are unable to do so. This is one way of expressing your wishes. Other means are available as well. The form, instructions on how to complete the form, and answers to questions regarding the form are available at the Missouri Bar's website. You do not need to have an attorney to complete the form but if it does not meet your needs, one should be sought.

The form, instructions on how to complete the form, and answers to questions regarding the form are available at the Missouri Bar's website:

<http://missourilawyershelp.org/legal-topics/durable-power-of-attorney-for-health/>

Selective Service . if you are male and 18

Registration with the Selective Services is the process by which the U.S. government collects names and addresses of men ages 18 through 25 to use in case a national emergency requires rapid expansion of the armed forces. Registering with Selective Service does not mean you are joining the military nor does it mean that you are signing up for the all-voluntary armed services. The fact that a man is required to register does not mean that he will be drafted. No one has been drafted since 1973. No one can be drafted into the military unless ordered by Congress and the president. A draft would most likely occur only in the event of war or national emergency. Young men convicted of failure to register may be fined up to \$250,000, imprisoned for up to five



years, or both. In addition to being subject to prosecution, failure to register may cause you to permanently forfeit eligibility for certain benefits. Not registering is a felony.

Young men may register:



- On line at: <https://www.sss.gov/RegVer/wfRegistration.aspx>
- At a U.S. Post Office where you can pick up a "mail-back" registration form; or
- By mail, as many young men receive a reminder mail-back card around the time they turn 18.

When You Leave Care

Per federal and state law, youth have a right to official documents including:

- Original or certified copy of your Birth Certificate
- Original Social Security Card
- Driver's license or State ID Card
- Medical Records (e.g. immunizations, current medications)
- Health insurance information
- Educational Records (e.g. diplomas, report cards, IEP, list of schools attended)

When you leave care, you should also have the following documents:

- Financial statements from financial institutions in which you have an account
- Portfolio and Lifebook
- Documentation of tribal eligibility or membership (if this applies to you)
- Previous placement information
- Documentation of immigration, citizenship, or naturalization (if this applies to you)



- Death certificates when parents are deceased
- Religious documents and information
- A list of known relatives, with relationships, addresses, telephone numbers, and permissions for contacting involved parties
- A resume, when work experience can be described
- A verification letter on state letterhead and signed by your Children's Service Worker which tells when you came into care and when you left.

Aftercare



What is Chafee Aftercare?

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Aftercare services are available as a part of this.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a safety net to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited Children's Division custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the need of the former foster youth.

Am I Eligible?

If you left foster care after the age of 17.5 but have not yet reached age 21, you are eligible for the following services:



Support services provide referrals to resources. This support service may be one-on-one contact for guidance or to just talk to someone you trust about what is happening in your life. You should have an identified personal advisor who could be a community member, co-worker, job mentor, friend, someone you recognize who has a personal interest in you and truly cares about you.

Emergency funds are considered short-term assistance that will enable you to continue with your efforts to become independent. This might

include: auto repairs, utility payments, food and rent. Throughout our adult lives, we may encounter emergency or crisis situations. When this occurs, we look to our family or friends for assistance. Some of you may not have these resources. These funds can be used to assist when possible.

Educational Assistance the Missouri Education and Training Voucher program offers funds, up to \$5000 or the Cost of Attendance, to former foster youth to enable you to attend accredited colleges, universities, and vocational training institutions. Missouri Reach and Missouri CCE are also available.

Healthcare Assistance MO HealthNet is automatically available to age 26 for former foster youth to provide medical and behavioral health care coverage. You must have been in care 30 days prior to your 18th birthday or on your 18th birthday. You will need to provide your current address to your local Children's Division office.



Job training may consist of a referral to a training site with possible financial assistance during the training period. Training in an occupation may enable you to find more than a part time job and become self-sufficient.

Housing (room and board expenses) would be considered as a safe shelter that could best meet your needs. These funds are meant to be flexible and short term, 90 days or less, to stabilize a particular situation. The funds may be used for a variety of reasons as a support, not as an on-going supplemental funding source. This may include any or all of the following: food, rent, security deposits, utility deposits, start-up kits which can include supplies and necessary furniture.





How Do I Receive Services?

To access the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program aftercare services or obtain more information about these services, you will need to contact your local Children's Division office. Children's Division staff will ask you to complete an application. The application contains identifying information, housing situation, current/future needs, medical/mental health needs, employment, education, goals, financial status, and available resources. The local staff will send the referral to the Older Youth Transition Specialist, who will connect you to Chafee resources in your area.

Re-Entry

Youth who left care after the age of 17 but are not yet 21 may elect to come back into care per **S.B. 205** (2013) and **S.B. 208** (2013). If it is in a youth's best interest, the youth may have his or her custody returned to the Children's Division through a petition to the Court from the youth, Children's Division, or Juvenile Officer.



If you should leave care and then desire to come back into care, you will need to complete an application and provide the reason for the request and how re-entry would be in your best interests. You may do so in any court jurisdiction in the state.

All case management services you would have received had you remained in care such as placement, adult support, and clothing allowances may resume. Services will be provided by your previous case manager when possible and agreeable to the youth. If you were previously case managed by Children's Division, these services are the responsibility of the Children's Division office where you now reside. If you were previously case managed by a Foster Care Case Management Agency and

return within the service region served by that agency, you should be assigned to the Foster Care Case Management agency for case management.

You will be expected to participate in your case plan, meet with your Children's Service Worker, Juvenile Officer, and Chafee provider, and go to school or work to demonstrate your efforts towards independence.

If you need immediate services, a referral for aftercare services can be made, as it may take some time for a petition to be heard in Court.

Healthcare for Former Foster are Youth

If you exited the State's custody 30 days prior to or after your 18th birthday and are not yet 26 years old you are automatically eligible for MO HealthNet coverage. You are eligible without regard to your income or assets, per RSMo 208.151.1 (SB 577, 2007 and SB 127, 2013). Your current address is needed so that you may receive a MO HealthNet card. Once you receive your healthcare card you should enroll into a MO HealthNet Managed Care plan for your physical healthcare; your behavioral healthcare and prescriptions will be provided by MO HealthNet.



For youth who are Missouri residents but are attending an out-of-state school or on a visit outside of Missouri, it is suggested you apply for healthcare coverage in the state you are residing in. Per federal requirements, Medicaid cannot be opened in two states at the same time.

If you have health insurance or obtain health insurance from another source such as employment, you must use your third party insurance before using MO HealthNet. You will need to inform your medical/behavioral services provider that you are eligible for MO HealthNet.

Older Youth Transition Specialists



If you want to learn more about services through the Older Youth Program, call the County Office in your Region, closest to where you live, and ask to speak to a Children's Service Worker who works with older youth. You may also contact the Older Youth Transition Specialist assigned to your service area. There are four Older Youth Transition Specialists located in Children's Division county offices throughout the state that cover multiple counties. Their job duties include accepting referrals, and providing support to and overseeing contracted services for Transitional Living and Chafee Programs. To locate the Specialist that is assigned to provide older youth services to the county you reside in, go to this web address: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/counties.htm>

Adoption Information Registry



You may have been adopted at any point during your foster care journey and have lost contact with your biological family by your choice or for your protection. The Children's Division has an Adoption Information Registry in which adult adoptees (age 18 and older) and biological parents or adult siblings may say that they wish to be contacted by each other. This is done voluntarily by all parties to the adoption. The registry is only for those 18 and older and adopted in Missouri, biological parents of a child released for adoption in Missouri, and adult siblings of a child released for adoption in Missouri. More information can be found at: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/adoir.htm>





Resources:

There are many resources available locally, throughout our state, and nationally. Below are some that may be helpful to you as you transition from foster care to live interdependently.

LGBTQ

(From *Getting Down to Basics - Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care*:

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/getting-down-to-basics>)

As a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (“LGBTQ”) youth in care, you deserve support and respect from your Children’s Service Worker, care providers and other adults involved in your life. You are entitled to receive nonjudgmental services. You have the right to be heard, to feel supported and to be safe and free from harassment based on your sexual orientation or gender identity. Your safety and well-being are key factors in your placement.

There are many placement options. As you discuss them with your Children’s Service Worker, think of family, friends, and relatives who could be placement resources. Identify what is important to you in a home setting. Communicate your concerns and preferences.

Your Children’s Service Worker and other adults in your life have an obligation to support you. Regardless of their personal beliefs, the adult professionals in your life have a legal duty to support and protect you from anti-LGBTQ harassment and mistreatment.

Tell your Children's Service Worker if you feel unsafe. It doesn't matter if you're actually LGBTQ or not. If you do not feel safe immediately report the mistreatment. You are entitled to protection. Report mistreatment to your Guardian Ad Litem. Your Guardian Ad Litem may be able to assist you in taking legal action on your behalf to protect you from discrimination or mistreatment.



Your LGBTQ identity is private. You may want to disclose it if you feel comfortable. Sharing your identity with your Children's Service Worker or others involved in your life may help them understand you better. It can also help them find a good placement fit for you.

Know your legal rights in care. You have the right to be treated equally, to express your gender identity and to be open about your sexual orientation.

The adults in your life should accept you for who you are and not try to change your sexual orientation or gender identity. You are not required to go along with any efforts, whether direct or indirect to change your sexual orientation or gender identity. You are entitled to maintain your own religious beliefs and to be free from efforts to convert you.

Become an authority on your own health care needs.

Locate LGBTQ resources in your community or seek out supportive adults who can help.



National LGBTQ Resources

"It Gets Better" - some short videos from the famous and not so famous offering support to LGBTQ young people: <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>

Resources specifically for LGBTQ youth in foster care through the American Bar Association:

Opening Doors Project:

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/what_we_do/projects/itsyourlife.html

Link to the Capacity Center for States website:

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/lgbtq/>

Link to the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections website:

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/lgbtq-issues-and-child-welfare.html

Information includes websites, information packets, resources from other states, and PowerPoint presentations.

Link to the Casey Life Skill Assessment supplement for youth and young adults who have specific life skill needs: <http://lifeskills.casey.org/>

Youth must sign up for a free account in order to access the supplement.

Missouri LGBTQ Resources

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) (To find a chapter just type in Missouri at the top in the search bar and it will show where chapters are in our state): https://www.pflag.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4v-gppvQ1QIVU7jACh36vQBaEAAAYASAAEgJ9jfD_BwE

This is a page that lists many LGBTQ resources in the state. There are several Straight/Gay Alliances sponsored by GLESEN in schools in Missouri on this site: http://www.squidoo.com/lgbt_missouri

St. Louis based youth support group - Growing American Youth: <https://www.growingamericanyouth.org/>

Kansas City Center for Inclusion is a community center plus support for LGBTQ with a lending library: <https://www.inclusivekc.org/>

Kansas City based youth support group - Passages LGBT Youth Center: <https://www.kcpassages.org/>

620 E Armour Blvd Kansas City, KS 64109
Main: 816-931-0334

The Center Project: <http://www.thecenterproject.org>

c/o Unitarian Universalist Church

2615 Shepard Blvd

Columbia, MO 65201

Main: 573-864-8676

Gay and Lesbian Community Center of the Ozarks: <http://www.glocenter.org/>

518 E. Commercial

Springfield, MO 65803

Main: 417-869-3978



Youth with Disabilities

The **Missouri Disability Portal** is provided by the Governor's Council on Disability and is designed to connect the public with national, state and local disability resources according to their inquiries and interests. The website provides a menu bar to major categories such as employment, education, housing, transportation and health for disability services and service providers:

<http://www.mo.gov/disability/>

Adult Education and Literacy instruction is designed to expand the educational opportunities for adults and to establish programs that will enable adults to acquire basic skills necessary to function in society. It will allow individuals to secure training that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens while allowing them to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school: <http://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/adult-education-literacy>

Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services is a federally mandated system which provides protection of the rights of persons with disabilities through legally-based advocacy: <http://www.moadvocacy.org/>

Social Security Benefits may be available for a youth who is permanently and totally disabled as defined by the Social Security Administration. This may consist of monthly payments through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. An application for SSI may be made by or on behalf of a disabled youth in foster care up to 90 days before foster care payments are expected to end. SSI may cover the room and board expenses for individuals in placement with an agency and the agency can be made the payee for benefits. When a youth in CD custody may be disabled, the youth's case manager should promptly explore the possibility of

filing an application for social security benefits:

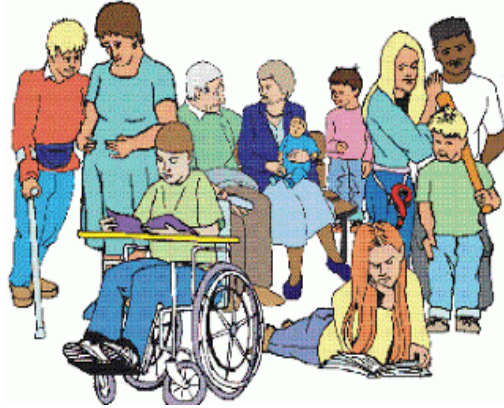
<http://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/>

Comprehensive Psychiatric Services are offered through the Department of Mental Health. Services such as Targeted Case Management, Community Psychiatric Rehabilitation, and Outpatient Community-Based Services are available:

<http://dmh.mo.gov/mentalillness/>

Vocational Rehabilitation offers services in vocational rehabilitation, independent living, and disability determination:

<http://dese.mo.gov/vr/vocrehab.htm>



Self-Care

We mentioned earlier in the book that "Being placed in out-of-home care is not an easy thing to go through. It is very typical for you to experience many different feelings . . . anger, sadness, anxiety, fear, and sometimes even relief. You can help yourself feel better about your situation by talking about your feelings with and asking questions." You may also want to talk to your Children's Service Worker about making an appointment to see a counselor that has experience in working with children and youth who have been in out-of-home placements. Helping you work through your emotions during this period of time is just as important as staying physically healthy.



Directory

The 2-1-1 national initiative seeks to reserve these three digits nationwide as quick, easy to remember telephone number for finding human services answers. 2-1-1 is an information and referral line that connects people to vital social services provided by a range of nonprofit and government agencies. Services vary from community to community but provide callers with a wide range of information about and referrals to human services for every day needs and in times of crisis: <http://www.211helps.org/What-Is-211>

Human Trafficking/Missing Persons

Child welfare agencies are required by federal law to develop policies and procedures to identify, document, and determine appropriate services for youth who are at risk of becoming a sex trafficking victim or who is a sex trafficking victim. Youth who run away are at a higher risk for human trafficking and national statistics show that youth who run away from foster care and run away multiple times are particularly vulnerable to becoming a victim of human sex trafficking.

There are two general forms of human trafficking (also called trafficking in persons and modern day slavery):

Labor Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, providing, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, **or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.**

• **Any child involved in a commercial sex act is a victim of human trafficking. There does not need to be any evidence of force, fraud, or coercion.**

If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, resources are available to help you. You may contact your case manager. Case managers have received training on human trafficking and will know how to help you or someone you know what to do and where to go for help.

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center has a toll-free hotline:

1(888)373-7888 or you may make an online tip report at

<https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/report-trafficking>.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) can be contacted at 1-800-THE-LOST. There is also a national runaway switchboard:

<http://www.1800runaway.org/>

Employment

There are many resources available to assist youth in employment skills, job searching and employment. Research indicates that employment while a youth is in care is a determinant of employment after transition from care. Unemployment is a national issue but can be even more difficult for youth in foster care.



- ❖ **Job Corps:** Job Corps is a career technical training and education program for young people age 16-24 that qualify as low income. It is a voluntary program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. Job Corps offers the opportunity to earn a high school diploma or a GED for those youth who don't have either. For youth who already have a high school diploma, Job Corps can help them prepare for college through partnerships with local colleges. Courses in independent living, employability skills, and social skills are offered to all Job Corps students in order to help them make the transition into the workplace. While enrolled in the program, students receive housing, meals, basic medical care and biweekly living allowances. Corps graduates receive transitional support services, including help locating housing, child care and transportation, for up to 18 months after they leave the program. Missouri has three locations. More information can be found at: <https://www.jobcorps.gov/>
- ❖ **AmeriCorps:** Each year AmeriCorps volunteers meet critical service needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other areas through nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide. Members tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, clean parks and streams, and recruit, train, and manage community volunteers for small community groups to nationally known organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America. In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive an AmeriCorps Education Award. AmeriCorps membership is open to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents age 17 and older. Members serve full or part time over a 10- to 12-month period. Upon successful

completion of their service, members receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$4,725 to pay for college or graduate school or to pay back qualified student loans. During their service, members receive health coverage, training, and student loan deferment. About half the members also receive a modest annual living allowance. As an AmeriCorps member, you will gain experience that translates directly into job experience in your chosen field. You will learn teamwork, communication, responsibility, and other essential skills that will help you for the rest of your life. Some youth find their AmeriCorps year to provide them with more experience and skills than they would have gotten in a traditional, paying job.

Members who serve part time receive a partial AmeriCorps Education Award. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 created two new federal programs: a new Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and a new Income-Based Repayment plan (IBR) for the repayment of federal loans. The new Income-Based Repayment plan helps to make repaying education loans more affordable for low-income borrowers, such as an AmeriCorps member living on a stipend; AmeriCorps service is also recognized as equivalent to a public service job for the purposes of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

To learn more, go to this link:

http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/overview/index.asp



- ❖ **US Military:** There are also opportunities for employment in the US military. Enlisted service members make up the majority of the Military and perform much of the hands-on work. Before serving in the Military, there are a few things a young adult can do to prepare. The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) Career Exploration Program can help young adults discover suitable jobs. To enlist, you must meet certain physical requirements and must be 18 years old, or 17 with parental consent. Youth must also have graduated from high school, although a General Education Development (GED) certificate is sometimes acceptable. The military

offers training and benefits. Once committed to service, training begins in the form of boot camp (officially called Initial Entry Training). College students interested in entering the Service as officers may elect to enroll in their school's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program or other service-oriented commissioning programs. Military academies and colleges provide another route to a college degree and officer status. To explore more go to this link: <http://www.todaymilitary.com/>

- ❖ **Vocational Rehabilitation:** Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) specializes in employment and training services that assist individuals with disabilities in becoming employed.



A VR counselor will determine eligibility for services. To be eligible, a youth needs to have a physical or mental impairment that causes problems with working and need VR services to be successfully employed. Once eligible, the youth will work with a counselor who will help the youth develop a plan for rehabilitation. Vocational information and guidance is provided: <http://dese.mo.gov/vr/vocrehab.htm>

- ❖ **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:** Private, for profit businesses across the state that hire nine targeted (including youth in foster care) groups with barriers to employment are eligible for a federal tax credit. This is something that you can let a potential employer know and it may be an incentive for an



employer to hire you. The Missouri Department of Economic Development, through Division of Workforce Development, administers the program in the state of Missouri. There is no limit on the number of qualifying new hires per business or total amount of tax credits per year. The forms as well as a fact sheet and brochure may be obtained by visiting the Department of Labor's website at: <https://www.doleta.gov/business/Incentives/opptax/>

Information is also available at:

http://missouridevelopment.org/pdfs/dwd_wotc.pdf

- ❖ **Missouri Career Centers:** Missouri Career Centers are located throughout the state and offer resume preparation, career assessment, online training and workshops as well as direct access to Workforce Investment Act Youth Programs. A map of the locations and other information is available at the site: <http://jobs.mo.gov/jobseeker/find-a-career-center>
- ❖ **MoJobs** is a labor exchange and job matching system available to you at no cost through the Missouri Division of Workforce Development at: <https://www.mo.gov/work/job-seekers/>

Additional employment information can be found at:

Department of Economic Development:

<http://www.ded.mo.gov/Individual/CareerAssistance.aspx>

Missouri State Government: <http://www.mo.gov/working-in-missouri/job-seekers-employers/>

US Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov/>

America's Career Resource Network:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/acrn.html>

US Department of Labor: <https://www.dol.gov/>

US Bureau of Labor Statistics - Employment Projections:

<http://www.bls.gov/emp/>



Money Management - Asset Development

Credit Reports



Building and maintaining credit is vital to successful transition from foster care. Information on credit reports is used to evaluate applications for credit,

employment, insurance, and renting a home. Monitoring credit reports is one of the best ways to spot identity theft. The Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 and amended in 2014, requires that each youth age 14 and older in foster care receive a copy of a consumer credit report each year until discharged from foster care and the youth must be assisted in interpreting the credit report and resolving any inconsistencies.

Free credit reports may be obtained through AnnualCreditReport.com.

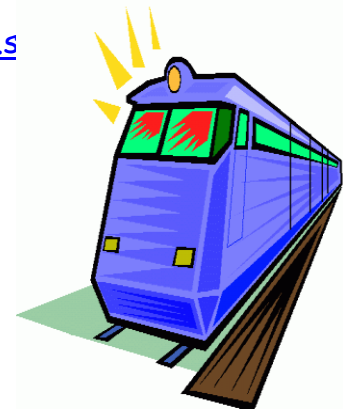
Your Children's Service Worker should assist you in understanding the credit report and resolving any inconsistencies. Helpful information can be found on the [Federal Trade Commission's](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/freereports/index.s) website:

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/freereports/index.s>

Transportation

Older Adults Transportation Service ([OATS](#)) and Southeast Missouri Transportation Service ([SMTS](#)) provide reliable transportation for disadvantaged Missourians so they can live independently in their own communities.

OATS and SMTS help people all over Missouri get to work, doctor appointments, essential shopping, and other necessary destinations. OATS and SMTS are not-for-profit public transportation systems and serve 107 counties in Missouri. [Missouri's Public Transportation System](#) is available in seven urban areas throughout the state.



Housing



Housing assistance is available in Missouri in the form of public housing and housing choice vouchers (Section 8). Assistance may be available to you during the last few months that you are in care if remaining in care until the age of 21. This is also a resource for you after you transition from care.

What Is Public Housing?

Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single family houses to high rise apartments for elderly families. The



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers Federal aid to local Housing Agencies (HAs) that manage the housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford.



Who Is Eligible?

Public housing is limited to low-income families and individuals. An HA determines your eligibility based on: 1) annual gross income; 2) whether you qualify as elderly, a person with a disability, or as a family; and 3) U.S. citizenship or eligible immigration status. If you are eligible, the HA will check your references to make sure you and your family will be good tenants. HAs will deny admission to any applicant whose habits and practices may be expected to have a detrimental effect on other tenants or on the project's environment.

How Do I Apply?

If you are interested in applying for public housing, contact your local HA at:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/mo.cfm>

How Does the Application Process Work?

The application must be written. Either you or the HA representative will fill it out. An HA usually



needs to collect the following information to determine eligibility:

- 1) Names of all persons who would be living in
 - a. the unit, their sex, date of birth, and relationship to the family head;
- 2) Your present address and telephone number;
- 3) Family characteristics (e.g., veteran) or circumstances (e.g., living in substandard housing) that might qualify the family for tenant selection preferences;
- 4) Names and addresses of your current and previous landlords for information about your suitability as a tenant;
- 5) An estimate of your anticipated income for the next twelve months and the sources of that income;
- 6) The names and addresses of employers, banks, and any other information the HA would need to verify your income and deductions, and to verify the family composition; and
- 7) The HA also may visit you in your home to interview you to see how you manage the upkeep of your current home.
 - a. After obtaining this information, the HA representative should describe the public housing program and its requirements, and answer any questions you might have to sign a form to authorize release of pertinent information to the HA.



How Long Can I Stay In Public Housing?

In general, you may stay in public housing as long as you comply with the lease.

If, at reexamination your income is sufficient to obtain housing on the private market, the HA may determine whether you should stay in public housing. You will not be required to move unless there is affordable housing available for you on the private market.

Public housing contact information as well as additional housing assistance can be found at this website:

<http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=mo&topic=renting>



Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program is designed to promote the general welfare and safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. Each participating household receives an allotment of food benefits based on the USDA's "Thrifty Food Plan". This allotment is adjusted annually according to the U. S. Department of Labor's analysis of the cost of food. Missouri Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is the method by which households receive and use Food Stamp benefits.

Households may use their Missouri EBT card in any grocery store or retail location anywhere in the United States that has been authorized by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and displays the Quest[®] sign. The benefits may be used to purchase any food or food products prepared for human consumption except alcoholic beverages and tobacco, hot foods, or foods prepared for immediate consumption. Benefits may also be used to buy seeds and plants for use in gardens to produce food for the personal consumption of the household.

To see if you might qualify for Food Stamps, a pre-screening tool for the Food Stamp Program is available:

https://dssapp3.dss.mo.gov/fsEligibilityTool/Household_Info.aspx

Anyone may apply for Food Stamps. To apply, complete the Food Stamp application form and return it to your local Family Support Division (FSD) office.

Instructions for completing this form are also available at:

http://dss.mo.gov/fsd/formsmanual/pdf/im31f_1205.pdf

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The purpose of the Missouri Temporary Assistance Program is to provide assistance to needy families with children so that the children can be cared for at home and reduce dependency by promoting job preparation, work and marriage. Funds may be used to prevent non-marital pregnancies and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.



Who Is Eligible?

The child who:

- is under the age of 18 years or 19 and attending high school or equivalent and expected to graduate;
- is in need of assistance because there is insufficient income to meet basic needs;
- is deprived of support because of the death, physical or mental incapacity or the continued absence from the home or unemployment;
- is living with one or both parents or a close relative who makes application for assistance.

And whose parent(s) with whom he or she is living:

- has not been convicted after August 22, 1996 in a Federal or State court of a felony or any crime related to illegal possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance;
- does not own resources valued at more than \$1,000 at application, excluding the home and one car. Recipients may own resources valued to \$5000 once a self-sufficiency pact is signed;

- assigns his or her rights for child support to FSD and further cooperates in identifying, locating and collecting child support from any parent who is absent from the home because of divorce, desertion, or abandonment;
- uses the money for the benefit of the children;
- attempts to support or help support the children by accepting employment when offered;
- applies for social security numbers for all members of the assistance group;
- is not a fleeing felon and is not in violation of a condition of probation or parole imposed under a Federal or State Law.



In order to qualify for this benefit program

You must be a resident of Missouri, either pregnant or responsible for a child under 19 years of age, a US national, citizen, legal alien, or permanent resident, have low or very low income, and be either under-employed (working for very low wages), unemployed or about to become unemployed. Able bodied adult cash assistance recipients must work or be in work activities (job training, subsidized employment, job search and job readiness assistance, etc.) after two years of receiving assistance. This provision is subject to good cause exemptions on a limited basis. There is a lifetime limit of five years of receipt of cash assistance under Temporary Assistance. Individuals receiving cash assistance (unless exempt) must work a minimum number of hours per week (averaged over a month) to be counted toward meeting the work participation rate.



To learn more about the Missouri Temporary Assistance for Needy (TANF) program, please visit: <http://dss.mo.gov/fsd/tempa.htm>



Parenting

Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program

The WIC Program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education and referrals to health care, at no cost, to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five who are determined to be at nutritional risk. To be fully eligible for the WIC Program, applicants must be determined by a health professional, at no cost, to be at nutritional risk (i.e., have certain medical-based or diet-based risk conditions). In order to qualify for this benefit program, you must be a resident of the state of Missouri, pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum woman, infant or child up to five years of age and: (1) are individually determined by a health professional to be at nutrition risk; and, (2) meet an income standard, or are determined automatically income eligible. A person who participates or has family members who participate in certain other benefit programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, MoHealthnet or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, automatically meets the income eligibility requirement.

To apply, set up an appointment at the WIC clinic closest to you:

<http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/locations.php>

For more information on Missouri WIC, please visit the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website at:

<http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/wicfamilies/apply.php>

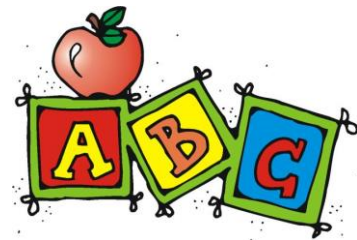
Please see the following website for the income standard or maximum income limit for WIC eligibility:

http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/eligibility_income.php

If you have questions about the WIC program call: 1-800-835-5465.

Head Start/Early Head Start

The Head Start program (for children ages 3-5) and Early Head Start program (for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers) promote school readiness for children in low-income families by providing comprehensive educational, health, nutritional, and social services. Parents play a large role in the programs, both as primary educators of their children and as participants in administering the programs locally. Both programs provide pre-literacy and literacy experiences in a multi-cultural environment. Parents are also provided social services, including assistance with childcare. Services are also available to migrant and seasonal farm worker families.



In order to qualify for this benefit program, you must be a resident of the State of Missouri, you must be a parent or primary caregiver responsible for a child who is too young for public school and you must meet income guidelines.

If you do not meet these criteria, you may still qualify if you are a U.S. national, citizen or permanent resident whose financial status is low income or very low income, who is under-employed, unemployed or about to become unemployed, facing

pregnancy, less than 19 years of age yourself, or the parent or primary caregiver for children under the age of 19 years. Other qualifications may apply.

To locate a center in your area:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>

For more information: <http://www.moheadstart.org/>



A Glossary of Important Terms

Aftercare: Support services through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program for youth who exited foster care after age 17.5 but have not yet reached age 21.

Care, Custody and Control: Care, custody and control means the exercise of supervision over a child under age 18 through the ability to control, dictate, coerce, persuade or require a child to act or perform in some desired manner. This type of control or supervision can only be exercised by a person who has parental authority or by a person to whom such authority has been granted by the person who actually has such authority. Parental authority as used here is the responsibility for the care, nurturance and socialization of the child, including providing for physical and emotional needs of a child.

Case Manager: The Children's Service Worker in the county of court jurisdiction who has the responsibility for coordinating all services delivered to you and your family. The case manager may or may not provide all of these services

directly, but must make sure that the services needed to accomplish the goals of the permanency plan is made available.

Case Plan: A written document which describes the social and child welfare services and activities to be provided by the Children's Division and other agencies for the purpose of achieving a permanent family relationship for the youth.

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program: A federal program created in 1999 with the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act. This program provides services to youth in foster care who are preparing to transition to adulthood, youth in care who were adopted or obtained legal guardianship after age 16, and youth 17.5-21 who have already left foster care and need assistance.



Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N):

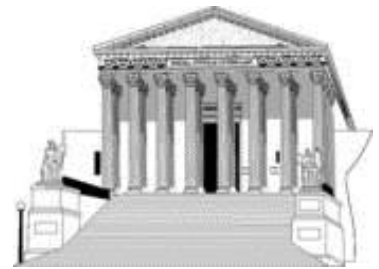
- **Abuse** is defined as any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a youth other than by accidental means by those responsible for the child's care, custody, and control, except that discipline including spanking administered in a reasonable manner, shall not be construed to be abuse. Note: **Care providers are not permitted to spank or use any form of corporal punishment on youth in out-of-home care.**
- **Neglect** is defined as failure to provide, by those responsible for the care, custody and control of the youth, the proper necessary support, education as required by law, nutrition or medical, surgical or any other care necessary for the youth's well-being.
 - *Proper or necessary support* is defined as including, "adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or other care and control necessary to provide for the child's physical, mental, or emotional health or development."

Concurrent Planning: A process of working towards reunification while at the same time, establishing and implementing an alternative back-up permanency plan for a youth. Concurrent planning efforts are used to more quickly move a child from the uncertainty of foster care to the security of a safe and stable permanent family.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA): A community volunteer trained and supervised by a local CASA program and appointed by court order to serve your best interest while you are under the jurisdiction of the court and in the custody of CD. As an officer of the court, the CASA may serve as a Guardian ad Litem or Friend of the Court, depending upon the program model adopted by the judicial circuit.

Court Hearings:

- **Protective Custody Hearing:** This hearing is held within 3 business days to determine if a youth should remain in protective custody.
- **Adjudicatory Hearing/Dispositional Hearing:** These hearings are usually held together to determine if the allegations of abuse and/or neglect are true and to determine who shall have legal and physical custody. If the hearings are held together they must be held within 60 days of when the youth was taken into protective custody. If held separately, there is an additional 30 days to hold the dispositional hearing.
- **Dispositional Review Hearing:** This hearing is held every 90-120 days after the Dispositional Hearing. The court receives information on the parent's and youth's current situation.



- **Permanency Hearing:** This hearing must be held within 12 months of when a youth was taken into protective custody. The court hears evidence and determines a permanency plan for the youth. The court must consult with the youth on their permanency and transition plans when age appropriate.
- **Post Permanency Hearing:** This hearing is held after each permanency hearing, at least every 6 months. The court receives information regarding the status of the case, progress made by the parents, and progress on the permanency plan.
- **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR):** A separate hearing held to receive evidence about whether a parent's right should be terminated and which, if granted, legally brings to an end a parent's right to make decisions in your life so that you can be adopted by others. The court determines if this would be in your best interest.

Court Jurisdiction: The authority of the Family or Juvenile Court to act, if it is determined that you are delinquent, dependent, abused, or neglected.

Custody: Custody means the Juvenile Court decides who is responsible for you. The responsible person shall: 1) provide food, shelter, and clothing; 2) supervise, protect and keep you free from harm; and 3) meet your health, education and emotional needs.

Family Support Team (FST): A group of individuals meeting under CD authorization who make recommendations regarding your permanency plan. People who should be part of the FST are: Your parents, placement provider, case manager, case manager's supervisor, GAL/CASA, juvenile officer, youth support, your parents' attorney, and most importantly, YOU! Other people that may be invited are: Your Chafee Specialist, teachers, therapist, or others as necessary or that are important to you.

Family Support Team (FST) Meetings: This is a meeting held to determine the appropriateness of your placement, the progress towards short and long term goals, and the need for continued care.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): The individual appointed by the court who represents your best interests in all Family or Juvenile Court proceedings. This may or may not be an attorney.

Independent Living Arrangement (ILA): A youth living on his/her own under agency supervision.

Interdependence: The concept that everyone and everything in a community is connected and one cannot survive without the help of other members and resources in the community and around it.

Lifebook: A folder, packet, or picture album consisting of personal mementos, pictures, birth information, family information, religious information, placement history, life and growth information, and any other information important to you. A lifebook should be kept for each youth in out-of-home-care.

NYTD: The National Youth in Transition Database is a data collection and reporting system in the form of a survey conducted at the time of exiting by Foster Care. States conduct a survey of youth in foster care at age 17 and conduct a follow-up survey at ages 19 and 21 to report information about youth outcomes in order to improve services for youth in care. Services that youth are receiving through the state's independent living program are also reported on all youth receiving independent living services.

Older Youth Program: Services provided to all youth age fourteen (14) through twenty-one (21) in custody or previously in custody. The Older Youth Program encompasses philosophy through positive youth development and the distinct permanency needs of adolescents. Assessment tools are used to develop individual case plans for youth to help assist with the successful transition from

adolescence to adulthood. Services include life skills teaching, housing options, educational assistance, and aftercare.

Older Youth Transition Specialist: Regionally-based Children's Service Specialist position responsible for monitoring and providing support to the Transitional Living Services, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Services, and Educational Financial Assistance Contract.

Out-of-Home Care: When you are in the custody of CD and placed somewhere other than your own home, you are considered to be in out-of-home care.

Permanency Plan: A written document which describes the social and child welfare services and activities to be provided by CD and other state and local agencies for the purpose of achieving a permanent placement for you.

Permanency Planning Review: This is a meeting held every six (6) months to determine the appropriateness of a youth's placement, progress toward the short and long term goals, and the need for continued care.

Permanency Planning Review Team: A group of individuals meeting under CD authorization to determine the permanent plan for a youth, the means of achieving that plan and, progress in achieving the plan.

Placement: A state-approved living arrangement for youth in foster care. This arrangement could be with family members, in a foster home, in a residential treatment facility, in a hospital setting, or in a Transitional Living Program or Independent Living Arrangement.

Portfolio: A collection of samples that communicate a youth's interest and give evidence of the youth's talents. It is used to show others what the youth has accomplished, learned, or produced. The portfolio is created during life skills instruction and is guided by the learning goals. The portfolio process involves the

appreciation and evaluation of one's work. Portfolio items are completed for each life skill instruction.

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard: The standard used when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. This standard should be characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child."

Resource Provider: An adult who has been approved by the Children's Division to provide care for youth who have been placed in legal custody the Children's Division. This includes Foster, Adoptive, Relative or Kinship (licensed or unlicensed), Respite, and Transitional Living Advocates.

I have received the Guidebook for Youth in Out-of-Home Care. My Children's Service Worker has reviewed the information contained in the guidebook with me so I understand its contents. I know that I may contact my Children's Service Worker with any questions regarding the guidebook.

Youth

Date