



Helping youth transition from out-of-home care to adulthood

Best Practice Guide



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Introduction

Minnesota's county and tribal child welfare caseworkers have responsibility to assist adolescents in out-of-home care with preparation for successful adulthood. [Minn. Stat., section 260C.212, subd. 1 \(c\) \(12\)](#), requires that youth, ages 14 and older in out-of-home care have an Independent Living Plan. It is important to understand that an Independent Living Plan does not conflict with, or replace, achieving permanency for adolescents. Youth who are state wards and those whose permanency disposition is permanent custody to an agency should be the highest priority for county services that promote preparation for independent living, permanency, and successful transition to adulthood. These youth will leave the child welfare system without the support of their birth families. It is the county and tribal agencies' responsibility to ensure that they leave out-of-home care with the following:

- A high school diploma
- Employment and/or acceptable post-secondary education
- Health care coverage
- A safe and affordable place to live
- A means of transportation
- Knowledge of and how to access community resources
- Connections to positive adults and family members.

The purpose of this best practice guide is to provide caseworkers with information and resources to work more effectively with adolescents. The content of this guide includes:

- Guidance on assessing youth's independent living skills
- Guidance on developing a complete and meaningful Independent Living Plan
- Resources for each section in the Independent Living Plan
- Information on teaching youth life skills and where to find curricula
- An explanation of the Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth ([STAY program](#)), which provides county and tribal agencies with funding to help prepare youth for successful adulthood, as well as other adolescent services programs
- Information on how caregivers and other significant adults can help prepare youth for adulthood.

Why is this work important? Research shows that youth transitioning from out-of-home placement:

- Are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system
- Are at higher risk of teen pregnancy and parenting
- Have lower reading and math skills, and high school graduation rates
- Have disproportionately high rates of physical, developmental and mental health problems
- Are more likely to experience homelessness
- Have higher rates of alcohol and other drug abuse
- Have higher rates of unemployment and likelihood of dependence on public assistance
- Are likely to be living with parents or other relatives within one year of leaving placement.

Why does this picture look so bleak? The following are examples:

- It is partly because of the circumstances under which children enter placement — abuse and/or neglect, which affects their ability to learn and form healthy relationships.
- Because of what happens to them once they are in the child welfare system. Youth may experience disrupted placements and frequent moves.
- Societal barriers, such as poverty, racism, and substance abuse that negatively affect families and youth from achieving successful outcomes.
- Collectively, families, agencies and communities must improve the experience of out-of-home placement to mitigate the negative outcomes associated with placement. Although youth transitioning from out-of-home placement clearly face many challenges, they have the ability to succeed in life with the support of caring adults and communities.
- Agency staff needs to focus on helping youth identify their strengths, and acquire skills so they can realize a future filled with promise.

Elements of transition planning

Review each of the below elements covered in the following pages:

- Assessment of hard skills: Tangible skills taught according to a learning plan.
- Assessment of soft skills: Developed through social experiences.
- Developing an Independent Living Plan with youth's participation.
- Gathering essential documents: These include a certified copy of their birth certificate, Social Security card, tribal card (if applicable), and state identification card are required for basic adult living. Neither housing nor jobs are obtained without these documents. Youth need a safe place to store their documents, and know the process for replacing them if lost.
- Teaching youth life skills.
- Developing permanent connections with caring adults.

Life Skills Assessment

Base a youth's plan for independent living on an assessment of life skills. The Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLS) is at www.caseylifeskills.org. The CLS is an assessment of youth's independent living skills. It consists of statements about life skills that youth and their caretakers complete. Use the resulting CLS score report as a starting point for discussion and development of an Independent Living Plan by caseworker, youth, caretaker, and other supportive adults in youth's life. The CLS is appropriate for all youth in placement.

Additional information on the CLS includes:

- It and the scored report are free.
- No permissions needed to use it or any of the tools at the Casey website.
- There are versions of CLS for four age groups. The assessment for youth ages 16-18 has 118 questions.
- The full-length assessment takes 15-30 minutes to finish. There is a shorter assessment, but not recommended.
- Supplements to the CLS apply specifically to youth who are Native American, gay or lesbian, pregnant or parenting, to assess youth's values or education.
- Assess youth as often as appropriate for their situation.
- The score report has the assessment score, a brief description of how the scores are calculated, and a summary of responses. Assessments are scored electronically, and will pop up on computer screen within one minute of clicking "I'm Finished" button at the end of the assessment.

- If youth or caregiver does not have access to a computer, they can complete a paper version of the CLS. Enter their paper responses into the CLS online and a score report sent via e-mail to computer in which data was entered.
- Use the free Life Skills Guidebook on the Casey website with the score report to create a customized life skills teaching plan. It includes activities and exercises to use for teaching youth.

Another assessment tool is the Self Sufficiency Matrix, available on mnhousing.gov/. It is an assessment and outcome measurement tool with 18 individual scales, each measuring observable change in some aspect of self-sufficiency. The Matrix, designed to be flexible, is based on goals and strategies of each program or youth. Administer the matrix at entry and periodically to measure progress.

In addition to the CLS and Self Sufficiency Matrix, consider other assessments that youth completed, which may include:

- Psychological test results
- [Vocational interest](#) and online tools (available free at [Workforce Centers](#))
- Academic assessments.

Developing an Independent Living Plan

[Minn. Stat., section 260C.212, subd. 1 \(c\) \(12\)](#), requires an Independent Living Plan for children ages 14 or older. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following objectives:

- Educational, vocational, or employment planning
- Health care planning and medical coverage
- Transportation, including, where appropriate, assisting child in obtaining a driver's license
- Money management, including annual credit reports
- Planning for housing
- Social and recreational skills
- Establishing and maintaining connections
- Regular opportunities to engage in age and/or developmentally appropriate activities.

The Independent Living Plan form that includes these objectives is in the Social Service Information System (SSIS) in the Service Plans folder. To create a new Independent Living Plan, choose "New Plan" from the action button and search for the Independent Living Plan in Document Templates (see Appendix A for the Independent Living Plan form).

The Independent Living Plan should not necessarily be limited to the objectives listed in this publication. The plan provides for adding additional objectives. Develop it from information gathered from life skills assessments, and any other psychological, educational, or vocational testing a youth has undergone.

Youth should steer development of their Independent Living Plan. Schedule a meeting that includes youth and their current caregiver, and have a conversation about results of their completed assessments. Youth and their caretaker might assess life skills differently, which can lead to a productive discussion. Ask youth to list additional supportive people in their life who can help them carry out an Independent Living Plan. This list might include friends, parents, extended family members, teachers, religious leaders, employer, a neighbor, etc.

Invite them to a meeting to participate in planning. Youth may include two other individuals on the case planning team other than caseworker and caregiver. Youth may select one member of the case planning team designated as their advisor to advocate regarding application of reasonable and prudent parenting standard.

[\[Min. Stat., section 260C.212, subd. 14\]](#)

Focus the initial meeting on youth's strengths and start with the skills area they are most interested in working on. Base the Independent Living Plan on youth's goals over one, two, or five years, addressing steps needed to accomplish goals and overcome barriers. Goals and objectives should be specific to youth's age, individual interests, culture, gender identity and the region in which they live. Include some long-term goals, as youth may not see, for example, why they should attend school regularly.

Review and update the plan every six months. Youth may think of additional supportive people in their life to invite to meetings when updating their plan. Add new information to the plan; add written goals and objectives specific to changes in assessment data, age, experiences, previously mastered goals and maturity.

Everyone involved in development of the Independent Living Plan, most notably youth, should sign it. Keep a signed copy in the case file.

Trained Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) providers statewide can assist on how to use this process to create transition plans for youth. Contact a local provider for help with meeting arrangements and facilitation. Although statewide, availability of this option will vary by county.

The following offer information and resources for each of the Independent Living Plan objectives required by Minnesota Statute, as well as samples of goals and objectives to be included in an Independent Living Plan. Each outcome is a goal by including the date youth will master goals.

Educational, vocational and employment planning

Practice recommendations for educational, vocational and employment planning include:

- Staying in communication with youth's school.
- Staying focused on school stability and continuity – critical for educational success.
- Monitoring educational progress and planning of each youth — attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan meetings, and providing informed input to ensure integration with youth's welfare-driven Independent Living Plan.
- Coordinating planning with schools. Per [Minn. Stat., section 120B.125](#), school districts must assist all students by no later than ninth grade to explore educational, post-secondary, and career interests, aptitudes and aspirations. This includes developing a plan for smooth and successful transition to post-secondary education or employment.
- Identifying one person in school to take a special interest in youth and act as their advocate.
- Involving parents and caregivers — encouraging them to develop relationships with school staff, know where to go when there are school problems, and providing homework support.
- Ensuring collection of all educational records for youth.
- Helping youth attain aptitude and vocational interest assessments, and identifying natural skills and abilities.
- Ensuring that youth benefit from career development, vocational and job training offered through their high school.
- Encouraging extracurricular activities to help youth develop positive social skills and self-esteem.
- Encouraging youth to obtain a high school diploma rather than a General Education Development (GED) diploma, as youth with a GED diploma tend to have lower post-secondary enrollment and earnings than those with a diploma.
- Supporting youths' plan to attend post-secondary education, using language that promotes it, such as when you attend college, for youth to see it as a reality.
- Preparing youth for post-secondary education both academically and financially, including:
 - Providing information on completing classes to help with post-secondary education, admission requirements, earning college credit in high school, and reviewing the college preparation timeline, including an [interest assessment](#) on the [Minnesota Officer of Higher Education](#) website.
 - Being familiar with [financial aid options](#), and what aid is specific to youth in foster care and culturally specific scholarships.
- Being aware that youth under state or tribal guardianship are eligible to request a [tuition waiver](#) at participating Minnesota state colleges and universities (MnSCU).
- Becoming familiar with [Education and Training Vouchers](#) that help current and former foster care and adopted youth pay for post-secondary education.
- Becoming familiar with the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) and the application due date.
- Assisting youth attending post-secondary school to apply for scholarships in addition to FAFSA and ETV programs to avoid taking out loans.
- Supporting development of job readiness and employment skills solutions.
- Working with job placement agencies.
- Developing employment-based collaborations among business, social services, education and employment agencies (i.e., internships, volunteering and paid employment).
- Participating in work competency training and receiving a certificate.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will complete an education/employment plan.

Possible skills/behaviors include:

- Attending education program regularly
- Following academic and behavioral expectations at school
- Demonstrating acceptable attendance
- Mastering studies by maintaining a minimum 2.0 grade point average each quarter/semester
- Completing homework and class work on time
- Asking for help when needed
- Becoming involved in an extracurricular activity at school
- Identifying GED testing site
- Successfully mastering the GED assessment
- Using the Minnesota Career Information System to explore careers and post-secondary education
- Participating in school conferences
- Taking the ACT test
- Reviewing the [ACT waiver brochure](#)
- Identifying and applying to three post-secondary institutions
- Completing financial aid paperwork
- Establishing long- and short-term employment goals
- Attending a job or career fair
- Identifying and using many resources to locate employment, including newspapers, local employment agencies, yellow pages
- Completing a resume and cover letter
- Completing and returning two job applications
- Learning about potential job interview questions by participating in a mock job interview
- Going to a job interview with appropriate dress, grooming and materials
- Spending one or more days job shadowing a person who works in an area of interest
- Demonstrating good attendance at work
- Getting to work on time for scheduled shifts
- Demonstrating self-control, leadership skills, group cooperation, anger management, and ethical behavior at work
- Demonstrating appropriate appearance at work by following dress code and maintaining clean and professional work clothing.

[See Appendix B](#) for online educational information and resources. [See Appendix C](#) for online employment information and resource.

Transportation

Practice recommendations regarding transportation include:

- Arranging opportunities for youth to learn to use public transportation
- Providing youth with bus cards
- Planning with foster parents steps necessary for youth to become a licensed driver
- Arranging for youth to take driver's education and get their driver's permit and/or license
- Providing opportunities for youth to practice driving
- Developing a plan with foster parents regarding driving privileges and financial responsibilities when youth receives a driver's license
- Ensuring that youth is added as a "named insured" or "additional insured" if foster parents plan to include youth on their car insurance policy
- Helping youth learn how to purchase auto insurance and a reliable vehicle
- Helping youth learn basic car maintenance
- Providing youth with a bicycle, if needed, for transportation to work or school.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will be able to meet their transportation needs.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding transportation include:

- Demonstrating ability to read a map and follow directional signs
- Locating a destination by following both written and verbal directions
- Identifying and can use public transportation in their region
- Demonstrating ability to read public transportation schedules and maps
- Knowing the privilege and responsibility associated with having their driver's license
- Obtaining and studying Minnesota's driver's manual
- Participating in classroom driver's education
- Obtaining a learner's permit and practices driving foster parents' car twice a week
- Participating in behind-the-wheel driver's training
- Testing for and obtaining driver's license
- Visiting an auto insurance agent to discuss coverage
- Visiting a used car lot with foster parent/s to learn wise consumer skills
- Estimating the cost of owning and operating a car for a month/year
- Demonstrating knowledge of auto loans and making car payments
- Understanding safety guidelines for auto drivers and passengers.

See [Appendix D](#) for online transportation information and resources.

Health care – medical coverage

Practice recommendations regarding health care include:

- Arranging comprehensive physical, dental, vision, hearing, mental health and substance abuse screenings before youth leaves care. Integrate this information into the Independent Living Plan.
- Arranging home and relationship safety education for youth.
- Educating youth about their mental health issues, sexual decision making, and constructive ways of dealing with stress.
- Helping youth learn to understand how to apply for insurance, accessing health care, and keeping appointments with health care providers.
- Identifying individuals who can help youth maintain safety and wellness.
- Assisting youth in consolidating and updating health records.
- Informing youth that they could be eligible for [Medical Assistance until age 26](#), if they leave foster care after turning age 18.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will live a healthy lifestyle.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding healthy living include:

- Demonstrating knowledge of health care insurance coverage options
- Identifying name, telephone number and address of dentist, medical doctor and therapist, and demonstrating how to make an appointment
- Completing applications for [Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare](#) at <https://www.mnsure.org/>
- Demonstrating knowledge of mental/emotional health needs
- Identifying reasons to seek therapy
- Participating in counseling with a therapist
- Articulating youth's need for prescribed medication and knowing the side effects and risks associated with them
- Demonstrating knowledge of what to do if a mental health crisis occurs
- Recognizing and correctly using over the counter drugs for pain, fever
- Demonstrating use of oral thermometer and how to deal with a cold or flu
- Identifying food groups that promote a healthy, balanced diet
- Maintaining appropriate weight
- Demonstrating regular medical and dental care
- Identifying negative effects of cigarette, alcohol and drug use
- Making healthy choices about cigarette, alcohol and drug use
- Knowing how to prevent pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will practice good emergency and safety skills.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding emergency and safety skills, including:

- Demonstrating knowledge of smoke detectors and how to change batteries
- Demonstrating ability to access emergency telephone numbers and complete first aid training
- Completing CPR training
- Identifying common fire hazards
- Identifying household hazards that may cause injury
- Determining when to go to the emergency room rather than the family doctor or clinic
- Demonstrating understanding of what domestic violence is and how to seek help.

[See Appendix E](#) for online health and medical insurance information and resources.

Planning for housing

Housing practice recommendations include:

- Providing life skills training that teach how to live independently
- Providing opportunities for youth to practice living on their own — housekeeping, grocery shopping, budgeting, cooking meals, working out disputes with roommates
- Developing knowledge of housing issues and resources for youth aging out of care
- Creating alliances with local housing providers
- Ensuring that youth have a safe, affordable place to live when they leave care — discharge to shelter care or homelessness is not an acceptable plan
- Ensuring that youth received the Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18; if they desire and meet eligibility criteria, maintain youth in care in an appropriate placement setting.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will locate and plan for appropriate housing.

Possible skills/behaviors for determining appropriate housing include:

- Is knowledgeable about their rights to remain in foster care up to age 21
- Demonstrates knowledge of different types of available housing, and is able to calculate costs regarding each option
- Identifies community resources that assist in locating housing
- Demonstrates knowledge of a lease’s vocabulary, rights and responsibilities
- Demonstrates knowledge of tenant’s rights and responsibilities
- Identifies supplies and furnishings needed for housing
- Develops a housing plan that includes a budget, furnishings needed, community supports, transportation and employment
- Develops a safety plan in the event of fire or gas leak.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will demonstrate housekeeping and food management skills.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding housekeeping and food management include:

- Demonstrates knowledge of cleaning products and uses
- Demonstrates use of laundry equipment
- Demonstrates use of dishwasher and doing dishes
- Can sew on buttons and make minor clothing repairs
- Maintains a clean living space
- Knows how to use a plunger and prevent sinks and toilets from clogging
- Knows how to dispose of garbage
- Can change a fuse or reset a circuit breaker
- Can do minor household repairs
- Disposes of food that has passed the expiration date
- Stores food appropriately
- Demonstrates ability to follow recipes and cook healthy meals for one
- Demonstrates ability to plan a menu for a week, develop a grocery list, and carry out the grocery shopping on a limited budget.

[See Appendix F](#) for online housing information and resources.

Money management

Practice recommendations regarding money management include:

- Federal law requires that each child age 14 and older in foster care receive a copy, without cost, of all consumer credit reports annually until discharged from foster care, and are assisted in interpreting credit reports and resolving inaccuracies. The following guidelines apply:
 - The Minnesota Department of Human Services is responsible to submit quarterly batch reports on youth ages 14 to 17 who had birthdays during the quarter, and were in a continuous foster care placement of 30 days or longer.
 - County and Initiative tribal agencies are responsible to assist foster care youth age 18 and older in obtaining annual credit reports until discharged from foster care, and documenting when youth refuse to cooperate. It is important to request reports from all of the three credit agencies, as fraud and/or identity theft might appear only on one agency report.
- Engage foster parents or other caretakers in teaching money management skills.
- Help youth create a monthly budget and open a savings account.
- Involve youth in a life skills training group that includes money management in the curriculum; a survey of youth who completed life skills training reveals that money management was the most helpful thing they learned.
- Involve youth in learning money management skills online.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will demonstrate money management skills.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding money management include:

- Obtained a copy of all consumer credit reports and understands the contents
- Resolved inaccuracies or issues in credit reports
- Develops realistic short- and long-term budgets
- Obtains information about opening a checking and savings account
- Demonstrates understanding of procedures for writing and cashing checks
- Reconciles and balances a mock checking account with sample bank statement
- Maintains positive balance in a checking account
- Demonstrates understanding of debit cards and can record debit card transactions
- Demonstrates an understanding of credit and loans, terms, interest and advantages and disadvantages
- Demonstrates ability to make wise credit decisions and an understanding of the importance of a good credit record
- Demonstrates knowledge of identity theft
- Knows how to read a paycheck stub, e.g., gross and net pay, income taxes and other deductions
- Knows how to complete state and federal tax forms
- Understands and can calculate sales tax
- Saved enough money for an apartment damage deposit, first and last months' rent
- Has a list, including costs, of what they will need when moving out on their own.

[See Appendix G](#) for money management information, resources and credit reports.

Social and recreational skills

Social and recreational skills practice recommendations include:

- Train caregivers how to respond to “teachable moments” to assist youth in healthy identity formation.
- Provide activities that support youth in developing a positive sense of self and normalcy.
- Acknowledge and support youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender or questioning/queer, and help them find information and resources. See the LGBTQ [best practice](#) guide for more information.
- Help youth develop their racial and ethnic identity.
- Either provide a life skills training group or refer youth to one and ensure that transportation is provided.
- Connect youth with a mentor.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will demonstrate good personal appearance and hygiene.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding personal appearance and hygiene include:

- Bathes regularly at appropriate intervals, including use of soap and shampoo
- Demonstrates proper care of skin, hair, nails and teeth
- Regular use of deodorant and other toiletries
- Complies with school and work dress codes
- Dresses in a culturally appropriate manner in free time.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding interpersonal skills include:

- Identifies several characteristics of positive relationships
- Appropriately meets and greets new people
- Compares and contrasts assertive and aggressive behaviors
- Demonstrates assertiveness when solving real-life problems
- Identifies and demonstrates strategies to resolve conflicts
- Demonstrates respect for people of different races, cultures, religions, class, political party affiliation, diverse belief systems, or sexual preference
- Identifies effects of peer pressure and practices how to say “no”
- Can develop a realistic plan with appropriate steps identified to achieve goals
- Can anticipate and describe consequences associated with different choices
- Identifies healthy boundaries and how to avoid becoming exploited.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will have successfully participated in three social/recreational activities.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding social activities, such as attend:

- YMCA summer camp
- A youth group retreat, including the group Initiatives course
- Guitar lessons once per week.

See [Appendix H](#) for online social and recreational information and resources.

Establishing and maintaining connections

Practice recommendations regarding healthy connections include:

- Help youth develop lifelong connections to at least one caring adult, including discussing opportunity of adoption
- Become familiar with the Permanency Pact, Youth Connections Scale, Family Finding and/or other permanency resource for older youth
- Provide assessments, services, and activities that address cultural needs
- Connect youth with opportunities to select well-screened mentors who can act as role models and teach youth specific skills
- Ensure youth knows why they are in placement
- Help youth get the information they need to create a Life Book
- Help youth identify and connect with birth family members with whom they can maintain a safe and appropriate relationship
- Ensure someone is teaching youth how to find community resources needed when they age out of care
- Be able to “unpack the no” for youth who do not want permanency
- Become familiar with the YTC (Youth in Transition Conference) process and consider using Family Group Decision Making to establish permanent connections.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will access community resources.

Possible skills/behaviors for accessing community resources include:

- Identifies names, addresses and telephone numbers of community agencies such as health clinics, employment services, public assistance/housing, motor vehicle division
- Knows who to contact if lost, frightened, depressed, anxious, sick, injured, out of food and money, utilities disconnected, or heat goes out
- Knows names, addresses and telephone numbers of supportive adults to contact after discharge from care
- Knows how to contact siblings and other birth relatives
- Demonstrates knowledge of community emergency medical response system
- Locates resources in the telephone book yellow pages, at the library and online
- Knows the location of post office and how to use it
- Knows how to register for Selective Service if male
- Knows how to register to vote, how and where to vote
- Knows the location of the nearest parks, banks and laundromats
- Uses newspaper ads, or online sites, to locate employment, housing or services
- Identifies public transportation options
- Demonstrates knowledge of community legal services
- Knows how to contact local church of their religious affiliation.

See [Appendix I](#) for establishing and maintaining connections, information and resources.

Disability income assistance

Practice recommendations regarding disability income include:

- Consult with Adult Services about whether youth will be eligible for adult services upon leaving care, including housing supports. This should be done prior to discharge.
- Re-assess youth for disabilities, if necessary
- Assist youth with Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or disability applications prior to discharge from foster care
- Assist youth with accessing housing and other services available to disabled populations, if applicable
- Help youth learn to understand how to apply for disability insurance, access mental health care, and keep appointments with health care providers.

Gathering vital documents

Practice recommendations include:

- Prior to discharge, provide youth with Social Security card; birth certificate; state identification or driver's license; tribal identification (if applicable); green card or school visa (if applicable); health care information, school, medical, dental records; sibling contact information, if siblings are in foster care
- Engage foster parents or youth service providers to gather vital documents
- Become familiar with documents required for the 90-day transition plan, including the health care directive.

Sample goals and objectives for Independent Living Plans – by June 2021, youth will possess all vital documents, and have a secure place to keep them.

Possible skills/behaviors regarding vital documents include obtaining:

- Birth certificate, picture I.D. and Social Security card
- Sibling contact information
- A lock box, file folder, or other means of organizing and saving vital documents.

Some documents, such as immunization records or birth certificates can be difficult to obtain, so youth will often need help with writing to request documents or paying fees. [Minn. Stat., section 171.04, subs. 1, 2 and 3](#), give foster parents and directors of transitional housing programs authority to approve (i.e., sign) driver's license applications for 16- and 17-year-olds who reside in their home or facility.

Teaching Youth Independent Living Skills

Group work

Teaching life skills to groups of youth is a successful approach and is highly recommended, as follows:

- Group work is an efficient use of youth worker's time, and provides an excellent way for youth to learn and practice social skills.
- Youth enjoy being with their peers, particularly those who share the experience of out-of-home care. A successful group provides a safe environment in which youth can share their feelings without fearing they will be laughed at or ignored.
- As trust develops within a group youth can try new things and perhaps not succeed, but know the group will be there for support.
- A group allows youth to share, where they can talk openly about their feelings.
- Youth learn to work as part of a group, better appreciating what they can contribute.
- A group can provide attainable challenges where all participants win, work together, share accomplishments, overcome risks, and learn problem-solving techniques.
- Groups offer a fun way to learn independent living skills. When youth are having fun, they are involved, motivated, focused, and more likely to remember what they learn.

The following websites offer independent living skills curricula for use with youth in groups:

- National Resource Center for Youth Services, nrcys.ou.edu/
- Project Adventure, pa.org
- Social Learning, sociallearning.com
- Northwest Media, northwestmedia.com.

One-to-one life skills training

Foster parents and other caretakers of youth are perfect one-to-one life skills instructors because their home can be a learning laboratory to practice skills, and the community is a rich resource of field trips for learning. Some agencies use in-home family services or volunteer mentors to work with youth one-to-one.

In addition to the National Resource Center for Youth Services, Northwest Media and Social Learning listed above, **Daniel Memorial Institute**, danielkids.org, offers curricula used with individuals. Youth can also learn life skills by exploring online learning sites below.

Free online learning for youth includes:

- Foster Club, fosterclub.com provides a national network, resources and encouragement for youth in foster care to be involved, informed and independent
- Youthhood.org has information for youth regarding health, education, social situations and self-advocacy
- Kidshealth.org/teen/ includes information on body, mind, sexual health, food, fitness, drugs, alcohol, diseases, infections, medical conditions, relationships, emotions and staying safe
- Driver's licenses, dps.state.mn.us/dvs/, has information on how to get a driver's license, costs, driver's manuals and more
- Buying a car: ag.state.mn.us/brochures/pubCarHandbook.pdf
- metrotransit.org/ shows how to use the bus and rail systems in the Twin Cities metro area
- MinnesotaHelp.info, click on Youth, then Money Management, or search by topic and address
- Bridgetobenefits.org/, click on Start for a screening for financial aid benefits youth are eligible for.

The [STAY Program](#) – support for independent living plans

The Minnesota Department of Human Services administers the [Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth \(STAY\) program](#). Federal funds for the program are available through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for the Successful Transition to Adulthood to help youth prepare for successful transition to adulthood. STAY funds are available to county and tribal agencies in a bulletin published on the department's [website](#).

Eligible youth

Eligibility includes youth up to age 23 who are currently or were previously in foster care for at least 30 consecutive days after age 14.

For purposes of the STAY program, out-of-home placement means 24-hour substitute care for youth placed away from their parents or guardians for whom the local social service agency has placement and care responsibility. Youth must be placed as a result of court order or voluntary placement agreement. Youth who run away from an out-of-home placement are considered in placement until the social service agency no longer has legal responsibility (i.e., discharged by the court). Youth placed by a county or tribal social service agency in chemical dependency treatment facilities, not based in a hospital, are considered to be in out-of-home placement. Youth adjudicated delinquent and court ordered to a non-secure facility may be considered in out-of-home placement if:

- The local social service agency has custody and responsibility for placement
- There is a Title IV-E agreement between the local social service agency and juvenile corrections, or
- Local social service agency is in an umbrella county.

Enter all placements in SSIS to ensure eligibility.

Temporary locations providing services to youth not considered a placement include respite care, visitation, summer camp, secure detention/correctional facilities, hospital/medical care, hospital-based chemical dependency treatment and psychiatric units, state regional treatment centers, and intermediate care facilities for those with developmental disabilities.

Use of funds

The following federal and state policies guide use of STAY funds:

- Funding must supplement, not replace, county or tribal agency efforts and funding sources.
- Provide independent living activities concurrently with adoption and other permanency activities, and not seen as an alternative to permanency for youth.
- Up to \$10,000 in assets is allowable for youth and still eligible for Title IV-E foster care and STAY-funded services.
- A limit of 30% of STAY funds can pay for room and board for youth discharged from county placement at age 18 or older. In these situations, room and board is damage deposits, utility hook-ups, purchase of household goods, and short-term rent subsidies. If providing help with room and board costs, agency should approve youth's residence as safe and appropriate. Homelessness or homeless shelters are not approved settings.
- For youth over age 18 and continuing to receive foster care benefits, agencies can require or obtain a court order that youth reimburse county agency for the cost of care. The cost of care does not include earnings from youth over age 18 who is working as part of an Independent Living Plan to transition from foster care, or income and resources from sources other than Supplemental Security Income and child support, needed to complete requirements of an Independent Living Plan.

- Funds may be used to assist youth who choose to remain in foster care past age 18 with room and board costs. In these situations, room and board is damage deposits, utility hook-ups, and purchase of household goods. STAY funds cannot be used as a substitute for foster care maintenance payments for youth in extended care between ages 18-21. Placement options for youth in extended care past age 18 may include supervised independent living settings such as host homes, college dormitories, shared housing, semi-supervised/supervised apartments, or other housing arrangements that meet an older youth's needs for supervision and support while moving toward independence. Agency needs to approve youth's residence as safe and appropriate. Homelessness or homeless shelters are not approved settings.

See [Appendix J](#) for successful ways to use STAY funds and community resources by social services staff statewide.

Documentation required in the Social Service Information System (SSIS)

1. The Independent Living Plan is in SSIS in the Service Plan folder. To create a new Independent Living Plan, choose "New Plan" from the Action button and search for the Independent Living Plan in Document Templates.

The federal Chafee Program, which governs and funds Minnesota's STAY program, mandates reporting of certain client-specific data in SSIS. This reporting system is the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). If county agencies are not successful in meeting reporting requirements, a fiscal penalty is imposed on annual Chafee/STAY funds, resulting in fewer STAY funds for county and tribal agencies. To customize federal NYTD regulations to Minnesota's efforts, the department adopted the acronym MNYTD (Minnesota Youth in Transition Database). Agency staff should familiarize themselves with the SSIS MNYTD IL Services and Survey Contact screens by going to Tree View for a youth who is receiving adolescent services. Clicking on the Adolescent Services folder will show the MNYTD options. For purposes of MNYTD, county and tribal agencies have data reporting responsibility for two overlapping populations of youth.

- a. **Served youth** encompass all youth receiving independent living services. This includes all independent living services and activities provided by county and tribal agencies, whether paid for with STAY funding or not. These services, as well as services provided by caregivers or other service providers, need documentation on an ongoing basis in the MNYTD Services screen. After selecting the reporting period and independent living services worker, check *all that apply* of services provided during the reporting period. (Reporting periods are semesters of the federal fiscal year: October 1 – March 31 and April 1 – September 30).
- b. **Baseline youth** include all those in placement on or within 45 days after their 17th birthday (but not before their 17th birthday), regardless of whether they received independent living services. This includes youth who are in voluntary placement, corrections youth in foster care, and youth who temporarily run from placement. Youth are in the baseline population if they are in the care of a public agency that receives Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments.

Once every three years, county and tribal agency staff must locate and make an appointment with these youth to complete the 22-item MNYTD survey and contact sheet. Agency staff should locate and familiarize themselves with the MNYTD Notice of Privacy Practices, MNYTD Survey and Contact Sheet. Because state regulations require that all youth in foster care receive at least one face-to-face contact each month, department staff recommends completing the MNYTD Survey and Contact form with youth at the monthly visit immediately following their 17th birthday.

At a visit with youth, introduce the MNYTD “Notice of Privacy Practices,” explaining the MNYTD survey process and reasons for it. Assure youth that their personal information and identity is protected in reporting to the federal government. Emphasize that youth’s participation will help other foster youth by giving the agency information about circumstances of youth as they grow older and/or leave foster care. Inform youth they may be selected to participate in the MNYTD surveys again at ages 19 and 21, with financial incentives for participation in future surveys. (County and tribal agency staff are not responsible for follow-up surveys at ages 19 and 21. A private research agency completes these surveys.)

Caseworkers may want to have youth come to their office to collaborate on the survey while they are in SSIS. Staff with laptops and remote SSIS access can record information directly into SSIS from the field. Staff without these capabilities may need to print the forms from SSIS or eDocs.

When caseworkers engage youth in completion of the 22-item survey, it is important that responses recorded are solely a youth’s own thoughts. Caseworkers may clarify questions but should not coach youth on answers, even if they know that information youth is providing is not accurate. “Decline” and “don’t know” are valid responses, so avoid the temptation to coach youth on questions if they indicate one of these responses.

Information collected about youth’s contacts will be invaluable for locating them at ages 19 and 21 for the follow-up outcome surveys. Enter as many contacts in SSIS as youth notes, including one for themselves. Encourage youth to provide as many contacts as possible, and as much information about each as possible.

Once youth completes the survey, staff should also complete the Survey Status box in SSIS. All MNYTD data entered in SSIS is uploaded to the department's data repository monthly. The department is responsible for assembling the statewide report and transmitting it to the federal level.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) for post-secondary education

The Education and Training Voucher program, federally funded through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, provides funds for post-secondary education for current and former foster care youth.

Eligibility

Youth can apply for the ETV program after meeting the following criteria:

- Under age 26 and have not received ETV awards for five years
- Graduated from high school or received a General Educational Development (GED) diploma.
- Accepted into an [accredited](#) federal Pell Grant-eligible institution of higher education.
- Awarded financial aid, such as the federal Pell Grant and the Minnesota State Grant.
- One of the following:
 - In foster care for 30 consecutive days or more between their 17th and 18th birthdays.
 - Adopted, including customary adoptions, from foster care after their 16th birthday.
 - In foster care on or after age 16 when court-ordered transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative.
 - Under state or tribal guardianship at age 18.

Youth must apply each year for ETV funds. They can apply for a total of five years up to their 26th birthday if they have maintained at least a 2.0 grade point average and are making progress towards graduation.

Deadlines

ETV applications are accepted July 1 to April 1 each year. Go to the ETV website to complete an [online application](#). Review the application checklist and instructions in the [ETV Program Guidelines](#).

Use of ETV funds

The ETV program is not a competitive scholarship. All eligible youth submitting complete applications are awarded funds if they demonstrate a need, and if funds are available. ETV awards are up to \$5,000 per school year to pay for tuition, fees, books, housing, transportation and other school-related and living expenses. See the [ETV Expense Guidelines](#) for a complete list of expenses ETVs cover. For information on the program, go to the [ETV website](#).

How caregivers can help youth prepare for independent living

Caregivers should be involved in four critical areas as youth transition to adulthood, including:

- Complete the caretaker section of the Casey Life Skills Assessment
- Participate in developing and updating youth's Independent Living Plan
- Transport youth to independent living skills groups
- Help youth learn skills they need to complete their Independent Living Plan by teaching in the home and community.

Caregivers have a unique opportunity to teach youth skills in the home on a daily basis. Examples include:

- Meal planning, grocery shopping, dining etiquette
- Cleaning, laundry, home safety
- Housing expenses and planning for a move
- Using public transportation or driving a vehicle
- What's involved in getting a driver's license, car and insurance
- Coaching youth as they practice driving skills
- Demonstrating how to do basic car repairs and maintenance
- Keeping track of important documents
- Creating a community resource directory
- Banking, credit cards and loans, saving money — planning for large purchases
- Budgeting, spending, comparison shopping, places to shop, reading sales ads
- Incorporating personal hygiene
- Understanding relationships and sexuality
- Sound decision making, setting short- and long-term goals
- Developing good communication skills
- Finding, getting and keeping a job
- Developing good study skills.

Training for foster parents includes:

- Northwest Media, northwestmedia.com
- Casey Life Skills Resources to Inspire guide, caseylifeskills.org
- Social Learning, sociallearning.com
- Request training through MNAdoppt.

See [Appendix N](#) for the Self Sufficiency Preparation Checklist and [Appendix O](#), Caregivers Can Help Adolescents.

Foster care benefits past age 18

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 [Public Law 110-351] is a federal child welfare law designed to improve both permanency and well-being of children and youth served by child welfare systems. A key provision of the Act provides the option of extending support for youth remaining in foster care beyond age 18 by offering continued Title IV-E claiming on behalf of eligible children. The Act permits Title IV-E claiming for youth ages 18-20 living independently in a supervised setting. Amendments to state law passed during the 2010 legislative session ensure that extended foster care statutes conform to new federal requirements for Title IV-E claiming for this population. Changes were effective Oct. 1, 2010.

To ensure that youth have sufficient time to decide if they wish to remain in foster care beyond age 18, six months prior to their 18th birthday, the responsible social services agency provides youth in out-of-home placement under authority of Chapter 260C (CHIPS petition) or 260D (voluntary placement agreement), with the Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18. Provide this notice to youth, their parent/s or legal guardian, guardian ad litem, and foster parents. [[Minn. Stat., section 260C.451, subd. 1](#)]

See [Appendix K](#) for Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18. The notice is available in SSIS.

Youth who are not able to return home or otherwise achieve permanency prior to age 18, and those in care immediately before age 18, and desire to remain in extended foster care, must meet at least one of the following conditions on an ongoing basis.

- Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential.
- Enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education.
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment.
- Employed for at least 80 hours per month.
- Incapable of doing any of the activities described above due to a medical condition.

Case planning, reasonable efforts, and verification for youth in care to age 21

Caseworkers have a responsibility to collaborate with youth to create a case plan for extended foster care. A case plan includes the out-of-home placement plan and an Independent Living Plan. The case plan should reflect agency's ongoing duty to make reasonable efforts to implement the Independent Living Plan, and to finalize the agreed upon permanency plan with youth. Reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan includes working with youth to ensure that foster care is the best legal arrangement for them, and assisting them in building lifelong relationships with family, siblings, and other caring, safe and supportive individuals.

Caseworkers have responsibility to document that youth remains eligible for extended foster care. Eligibility condition/s for each youth must be included in the case plan and documented in SSIS. Maintain verification of each eligibility condition in youth's case file. Maintenance of verifications is of particular importance for Title IV-E eligible youth.

If youth's continuation in extended foster care is due to incapacity to participate in school, employment, or vocational training due to a medical condition, caseworkers must regularly update case plans to include written information that addresses medical condition/s and youth's incapacity.

Legal responsibility for continued placement up to age 21

Youth in extended foster care are adults for all purposes except continued provision of foster care. Agencies must have legal responsibility to place or maintain anyone over age 18 in foster care. For youth under court jurisdiction prior to age 18, obtain responsibility through:

A court order that terminates legal custody or guardianship, but maintains court jurisdiction and indicates youth continues in placement under legal responsibility of a county or tribal agency. The court may continue jurisdiction over youth up to their 19th birthday when in their best interest to provide safety or health of youth; accomplish additional planning for independent living, or for transition out of foster care; or to support youth's completion of high school or a high school equivalency program.

[\[Minn. Stat., section 260C.193, subd. 6 \(2\)\(c\)\]](#)

- Legal responsibility for youth can also be obtained by a youth entering into a voluntary placement agreement with agency responsible for placement. A unique voluntary placement agreement was developed for this purpose ([see Appendix L.](#)). The voluntary placement agreement is available in SSIS and on eDocs.

Required judicial reviews and determinations

Youth continuously in foster care

When youth is in continuous foster care, the court must conduct court reviews of reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan at least every 12 months. Agencies must ask the court to review and make findings on its reasonable efforts to:

- Ensure that foster care is the best legal arrangement for youth, or whether another legal option would better meet their need for a life-long family
- Assist youth in building life-long relationships with family, siblings, and other caring, safe and supportive individuals
- Plan with youth to utilize supports and services that develop an appropriate set of skills necessary for successful independence after foster care.

Youth re-entering foster care

A voluntary placement agreement should be executed with youth re-entering foster care after age 18. Within 180 days of youth's placement by voluntary placement agreement, the court must make a judicial determination that placement is in youth's best interest. The finding may be based on youth's request for extended foster care benefits. When a youth re-enters foster care after age 18, court reviews of reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan must be held at least every 12 months, beginning from the date youth re-enters foster care. Agencies must ask the court to review and make findings on its reasonable efforts, as noted above. [See Appendix L.](#)

Asking the court to make required determinations

A county or tribal agency may ask the court to re-open a juvenile protection file for youth to request the court to make a required best interest determination. The county attorney's office should discuss with the local court what procedural requirements are necessary to re-open court jurisdiction and a file. A county's Children's Justice Initiative Team is an ideal place to have this discussion. Procedural requirements might include filing a motion for the court to re-assume jurisdiction under [Minn. Stat., section 260C.193, subd. 6](#), as amended in Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 301, article 3, section 6; and filing a request with the court for a review hearing under [Minn. Stat., section 260C.212, subd. 7](#), for determination that placement is in youth's best interest. Agencies should file the out-of-home placement plan and a report including sufficient information for the court to conduct a review and make a determination. The best interest judicial determination is required within 180 days of youth's re-entry in foster care, which coincides with the required timing of administrative or court reviews required under section 475(5) (B) of the Social Security Act and [Minn. Stat., section 260C.212, subd. 7](#).

Youth under tribal jurisdiction

When a tribe has a Title IV-E agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, or with a local social service agency, it is responsible for meeting requirements of Title IV-E which, in Minnesota, includes providing an opportunity for youth to remain in foster care past age 18, effective Oct. 1, 2010. [Sections 472(a) (2) (B) and 475(8) of the Social Security Act] This requirement does not apply to tribes that do not have a Title IV- E agreement with either entity. For tribes with a Title IV-E agreement, implementing requirements consistent with the way Minnesota is opting into Fostering Connections, includes:

- Offering an opportunity for youth to remain in foster care past age 18 when they are willing to meet the same eligibility criteria established at Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 301, article 3, section 9
- Utilizing foster care benefits to pay for supervised independent living settings as described in Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 301, article 3, section 9
- Developing a plan for services and supports that encourages continued development of independent living skills, and life-long connections for youth with family, community, and their tribe, according to requirements of Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 301, article 3, section 9.

County agencies are financially responsible for the cost of foster care for Indian children under tribal jurisdiction, pursuant to [Minn. Stat., section 260.771, subd. 4](#), and remain responsible for the cost of foster care placement for tribal youth who stay in foster care past age 18, under the definition of child, amended pursuant to Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 301, article 3, section 5. When a tribe has a Title IV-E agreement with either the department or a county agency, it and the county with financial responsibility should continue to work to ensure necessary Title IV-E requirements are met and documented so county agency can continue to claim Title IV-E reimbursement for eligible youth.

When [Minn. Stat., section 260.771, subd. 4](#), does not apply because of tribal participation in the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative, tribes are responsible for the cost of foster care for youth who continue in or re-enter foster care after age 18. When [Minn. Stat., section 260.771, subd. 4](#), does not require a county agency to pay for a tribally ordered placement of youth re-entering foster care after age 18, because youth would not be eligible for placement by a county agency, as amended in Minn. Session Laws 2010, Chapter 269, article 2, section 3, tribes have financial responsibility for the cost of foster care.

Tribes participating in the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative are responsible for the cost of foster care for youth continuing in or re-entering foster care after age 18. [[Minn. Stat., section 256.01, subd. 14\(b\)](#)] Federal Title IV-E reimbursement is available for eligible costs. Tribes having no Title IV-E agreement with the department or local county agency make their own determinations about continuing tribal jurisdiction and providing tribal children with an opportunity to remain in foster care after age 18. They are not bound by the department's exercise of the option to provide services to youth over age 18 and claiming federal reimbursement under Title IV-E.

Foster care settings for youth up to age 21

Youth ages 18-21 may continue in a traditional foster care setting or in a supervised setting where they are living independently. Child foster care license holders caring for persons over age 18 but under 21 may do so without a variance. The particular foster care setting, including supervised independent living settings, are selected for youth based on their best interest, and an individual determination of need. A supervised independent living setting should be approved by the responsible social services agency. A significant part of selecting a placement setting is the assessment of youth's needs, goals, and their personal preference. Supervised independent living settings may range from apartments, dorms, host homes, or other innovative ideas that meet youth's need for supervision and support as they move toward independence. Supervised independent living settings do not require licensure, but ensuring appropriate supervision, minimally one face-to-face visit each month, is required for youth living in these settings.

Foster care maintenance payment requirement for youth in care to age 21

All youth in extended foster care remain eligible for foster care maintenance payments. The process and items covered in the foster care maintenance payment remains the same as a foster child of any age, consistent with Minn. Rules, parts 9560.0650 to 9560.0670. The foster care maintenance payment includes the basic foster care maintenance and the supplemental rate as established through the Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY). The extended foster care – supervised independent living (EFC-SIL) MAPCY sub-tool is used for youth ages 18 up to 21 living in a supervised independent living setting, which may include apartments, dorms, host homes and other settings. The EFC-SIL MAPCY sub-tool focuses on:

- Transportation to preserve connections
- Transportation to work or school
- Communication
- Young parents
- Child care for young parents

All youth, including those in supervised independent living settings, must have MAPCYs completed to determine their supplemental monthly rate. For youth ages 18 up to 21 living independently in a supervised setting, there may be no direct caregiver providing food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal incidentals or reasonable travel for home visits or school stability. In those situations, an agency may pay all or part of the foster care maintenance payment directly to youth. This flexibility to pay all or part of the maintenance payment allows an agency to help individual youth adjust to independent living and learn to budget and pay bills.

Exit and re-entry to care after age 18

Youth who cease to meet one of the eligibility conditions after attaining age 18 may be discharged from foster care. Caseworkers should make efforts to engage youth in a planned discharge from foster care. Notice of termination of benefits and youth's right to appeal under [Minn. Stat., section 256.045](#), must be provided on discharge.

Under certain conditions, youth over age 18 may request return to care after discharged from placement. The request to return to care is made to the county or tribal social service agency responsible for youth's placement and care immediately prior to discharge. This includes:

- Youth who left foster care while under state guardianship (i.e., as state wards) must be allowed to return to care, if they commit to meeting one of the required conditions and in an approved foster care setting.
- Other youth previously in placement under Chapter 260C or 260D of Minn. Stat. within the six consecutive months prior to their 18th birthday, or discharged while on runaway status after age 15, may return to care between the ages of 18 up to 21.
- The ability of youth under tribal care and responsibility at discharge to return to extended foster care is dependent on tribe's code and practice.

Youth approved to return to care should sign a voluntary placement agreement with the responsible agency, authorizing placement. Notice of denial of benefits and youth's right to appeal must be given to youth requesting and denied return to care under [Minn. Stat., section 256.045](#).

Eligibility for health care

All youth in foster care up to age 21 are automatically eligible for Medical Assistance (MA). Caseworkers should follow current policy for children receiving foster care benefits. See Health Care Programs Manual 03.25.20 — Medical Assistance for Children in Foster Care.

Effective Jan. 1, 2014, the Affordable Care Act created a new MA eligibility category for youth leaving foster care. Those who left foster care on or after their 18th birthday, and on MA or MinnesotaCare, and were in foster care in Minnesota, are eligible for MA until their 26th birthday. This new eligibility category extends coverage to both former Title IV-E and non-Title IV-E children.

Former foster care youth interested in applying for MA should go to the MNsure website at mnsure.org.

The 90-day transition plan requirement

If youth do not wish to remain in extended foster care, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires that youth discharged from foster care at age 18 or older, caseworkers develop a personalized transition plan, as directed by youth. The transition plan must be developed and executed during the 90-day period immediately prior to their discharge date. The transition plan must be as detailed as youth may elect, and include specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, work force supports and employment services. Agencies must provide contact information if youth need resources or help in a crisis situation through age 21.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act [P.L. 111-148] further amends 90-day transition plan requirements to include the importance of designating someone to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of youth if they are unable to do so, and does not have or want a relative who would otherwise be designated under state law to make such decisions. Youth must be given information about how to execute a health care power of attorney, health care proxy, or other similar documents recognized under state law. In Minnesota, the procedure for designation of health care treatment decisions is a Health Care Directive, governed by [Minn. Stat., Chapter 145C](#). If youth want to complete a Health Care Directive, a suggested form is in [Minn. Stat., section 145C.16](#).

See [Appendix M](#) for the 90-day Transition Plan.

Appendix A

Independent Living Plan

Youth's name:

Next review date:

Plan dates:

Worker phone:

Work name:

What assessments were used to develop the plan?

Casey Life Skills

Mental health

Educational

Chemical health

Vocational

Other (describe)

Identify individuals involved in developing/reviewing the plan:

Did agency staff advise all parties of availability of benefits of the foster care program past age 18?

Yes

No

Date:

Reason:

All required parties that received the notice:

Youth

Foster parents or care provider

Parents or legal guardians

Guardian ad litem

Educational, vocational or employment planning

Consider the following:

- Obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Engaging in career/employment planning and/or is employed
- Planning to or enrolled in a post-secondary education/training program (college, vocational/technical, trade school) and is applying for or obtained financial aid for which they are eligible, including the Education and Training Voucher program.

What has youth identified as their educational, vocational or employment needs and goals?

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Transportation

Consider the following:

- Enrolled in or completed a driver's education course and/or received a driver's license, or has demonstrated ability to use public transportation in their community.

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Health care planning and medical coverage

Youth has health care coverage and providers to meet physical, dental and mental health needs, and has an understanding of physical, dental and mental health needs and services.

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Planning for housing

Consider the following:

- Exploring safe, stable and affordable housing with necessary supports, which does not include a homeless shelter
- Identifying an alternative affordable housing plan, which does not include a homeless shelter, if the original housing plan is unworkable
- Saving sufficient funds to pay for first month's rent and damage deposit.

Where would youth like to live upon discharge from foster care?

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Money management

The following should be considerations:

- Working part-time or interested in seeking part-time employment
- Learning to manage and budget income by opening and maintaining checking/savings accounts
- Becoming knowledgeable about credit, bank cards, developing good credit history, etc.

Federal law requires county agency to ensure that youth receives annually, at no cost to them, a copy of their consumer credit report, as defined in Minn. Stat., section 13C.001, and assistance in interpreting and resolving inaccuracies in a report. If done within the previous 12-month period, it is not necessary to do it again before youth is discharged from foster care.

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Social and recreational skills

Consider the following, youth:

- Is involved in school, extracurricular, cultural and/or religious activities
- Is developing or pursuing interests or hobbies at home and in the community
- Have opportunities to engage in age- or developmentally appropriate activities.

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Establishing and maintaining connections

Youth has:

- A lifelong connection to at least one caring adult, including discussing opportunity for adoption
- Established connections with their family and community.

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Disability income assistance

Is applying for or obtained disability income assistance for which youth is eligible.

Applied:

Yes

No

Outcome:

Youth's comments/feedback:

Vital documents

Vital documents [Minn. Stat., section 260C.203 (e) (3)] that must be obtained prior to discharge from foster care, include: [Minn. Stat., section 260C.219 (e)]

- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- State identification card or driver's license
- Tribal enrollment identification card
- Contact information for youth's siblings, if in foster care
- Contact list of youth's medical, dental and mental health providers
- Youth's social and medical history
- Medical records
- Dental records
- Green card, school visa, or other immigration documentation
- School records
- If male, registered for Selective Service

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Additional goal 1

Goal:

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Additional goal 2

Goal:

What strengths and abilities does youth have to make progress toward or accomplish goals?

What specific steps need to be taken by youth, caseworker, foster parent/caregiver for youth to make progress toward goals?

Provider	Timeframe	Progress

Youth's comments/feedback:

Signature page

Youth and caseworker sign case plans. Provide a copy of the plan to youth and foster parent/caregiver.

Youth:

Caseworker:

Supervisor:

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling your county worker. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at 800- 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call 877-627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact agency's ADA coordinator.

Appendix B

Education

The Minnesota Department of Human Services' Adolescent Services website includes information for foster care youth on how to plan and pay for post-secondary education.

[Minnesota Education and Training Voucher program guidelines](#) provide information on the program, a college budget, scholarships and resources.

[Minnesota Department of Education](#)

- [Career Technical Education](#)
- [Earn College Credit in High School](#)
- [Graduation Requirements](#)
- [Adult Basic Education and GED information](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Minnesota Office of Higher Education](#)

- [Preparing for college](#): What **classes to take** in high school, how to **earn college credit in high school** and mapping out a plan with the **college prep timeline**, including an interest assessment.
- [Choosing a college](#): **How to choose a college**, [exploring college options](#), and how to [apply to college](#). Download or request a free copy of [Choosing a College guide](#).
- Find Minnesota Campuses with this [searchable map](#)
- [Paying for college](#): Review for financial aid resources. Download or request a free copy of [Financial Aid Basics](#).

[PACER](#) (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights): Offers training, advocates and resources for transitioning youth with disabilities.

[Youthhood.org](#) has information for teachers and students.

Foster Care to Success: [fc2success.org](#) has scholarships for up to \$10,000 for post-secondary education for youth not adopted, under age 25, who spent at least 12 months in foster care.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#))

[Tuition waiver](#): Students under state or tribal guardianship who meet waiver requirements and attend a post-secondary program offering a waiver are eligible to receive a tuition waiver.

Appendix C

Employment

For ideas about planning a career, visit Career Voyages, careeronestop.org/, includes online videos on careers.

Next Steps: nextsteps.org/.

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), deed.state.mn.us:

- [Job Search Guide](#) provides insights and advice to plan and launch a successful job search
- DEED rehabilitation services, [helps those with disabilities](#), deed.state.mn.us/.

Resources, Inc. has help for job seekers, resource-mn.org/.

Youthbuild.org is a program for unemployed out-of-school youth, ages 16-24. Training on how to build and rehabilitate affordable housing in their communities, while offering job training, secondary education, counseling, and leadership development opportunities.

AmeriCorps, <https://americorps.gov/>, is a network of national programs that employ youth age 17 or older, offering a modest wage, sometimes housing, and higher education funds when the 10-12-month period of service is complete. Youth work for nonprofit and faith-based organizations and public agencies.

Cityyear.org at <https://www.cityyear.org/> is a program of AmeriCorps which unites youth and young adults of all backgrounds, ages 17-24, for a demanding year of community service and leadership development.

Job Corps at <https://www.jobcorps.gov/> helps eligible young adults ages 16 through 24 complete their high school education, trains them for meaningful careers, and assists them with obtaining employment. Students have access to room and board while they learn skills in specific training areas for up to three years. Job Corps helps students complete their education, obtain career technical skills, gain employment and provides transitional support services, such as help finding employment, housing, child care and transportation.

Today's Military at <https://www.todaymilitary.com/> has information on all branches and programs of the military, including ROTC.

Ticket to Work at <https://yourtickettowork.ssa.gov/> is a self-sufficiency and employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in working.

Appendix D

Transportation

Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Driver and Vehicle Services at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/> has information regarding driver's manuals, how to get a driver's license, costs and more.

Minnesota Office of the Attorney General at <https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/Auto/Default.asp> to review [The Car Handbook](#) with car buying guidelines and references.

Metro Transit at <https://www.metrotransit.org/> provides informant on how to use bus and rail systems in the Twin Cities metro area.

MinnesotaHelp.Info at <https://www.minnesotahelp.info/> has information about transportation options, as well as other statewide services, based on zip code.

Appendix E

Health

KidsHealth at <https://kidshealth.org/>, includes the following:

- Information for teens on body, mind, sexual health, food, fitness, drugs, alcohol, diseases, infections, medical conditions, relationships, emotions and staying safe
- Easy recipes and cooking for kids.

Girlshealth.gov at <https://www.girlshealth.gov/> is a girls' health site that addresses body, nutrition, mind, relationships, drugs, alcohol, smoking, bullying, safety and their future. Resources for educators are included.

Planned Parenthood at <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/> offers affordable birth control, gynecological care, pregnancy testing, counseling, STD and HIV testing, listings of local sites and how to schedule an appointment.

Minnesota Department of Human Services:

- [Child and Teen Check-up program](#) is a comprehensive child health program provided to children and teens from newborn through age 20 enrolled in Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare. Visit the website and go to Child and Teen Check-ups (C&TC) Coordinator's List to find where to arrange for services in a community.
- [Health care programs](#) include health care program information for adults with low incomes, such as Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare, and Minnesota Family Planning program.
- [Economic Assistance](#) provides information on housing, food, income and child care.

Pacer Center at <https://www.pacer.org/> helps children and youth with disabilities and has several publications.

Social Security at <https://www.ssa.gov/> has a screening tool under Disability and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), to determine eligibility for programs and benefits.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at <https://www.samhsa.gov/> has information about prevention and treatment issues.

Well-being Indicator Tool for Youth at cascw.org/ was designed for youth aged 15-21 who currently are in, or in the past had contact with the child welfare system.

Appendix F

Housing

Minnesota Attorney General, <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/consumer/housing/> has information on housing and the Landlords and Tenants Rights and Responsibilities book.

Minnesota Department of Human Services resources: Housing and Homelessness resources at <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/housing-and-homelessness/>.

Rent Wise, <https://extension.umn.edu/renting/rentwise-curriculum> is a curriculum offered through Extension Offices on finding, paying for and keeping housing.

Housing Benefits 101 (HB101) at <https://mn.hb101.org/> explores housing options. Discover what works for you. Make a plan to get there. Securely store files in the online vault. Search for available housing, supportive services, and homeless services in an area.

[HousingLink Supportive and Transitional Housing](#): On the website, enter Youth in the Group Served box under Supportive & Transitional Housing in Minnesota to locate housing. The Housing Resources and Subsidized Housing tabs have other resources.

[MinnesotaHelp](#): The website has a tool to help make decisions about school, jobs, health, housing, family and friends, and community resources.

[Youth Services Network](#): Shelter and other services for youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless at <https://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org/> has a crisis assistance directory with information regarding shelters and transitional living programs.

[Foster Youth to Independence \(FYI\) housing vouchers](#) are available to youth aging out of foster care after age 18. Contact the local Public Housing Authority to see if they participate in this voucher program.

Appendix G

Money management

Consumer Credit Reports for Youth in Foster Care [bulletin #19-68-02](#) provides guidance on obtaining credit reports for foster care youth, ages 14-21, and assistance resolving credit issues.

[Financial Empowerment Toolkit for Youth and Young Adults in Foster Care](#) was developed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families and Office of Community Services. It provides caseworkers, independent living skills providers, foster parents, and supportive adults, with strategies and resources to critically evaluate and improve ability to promote financial capabilities of youth in foster care. The toolkit includes the following resources:

- [Knowing credit history](#): How to interpret a credit report
- [Get tax savvy](#): What you need to know about taxes
- [Creating a credit profile](#): How to build your credit
- [Protect yourself and your stuff](#): What you need to know about insurance
- [Identity theft](#): How to resolve errors on your credit report.

[A summary of your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.](#)

[Protecting the Credit of Youth in Foster Care](#), The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013.

Obtain a free annual credit report at [AnnualCredit Report.com](#).

[Credit Handbook](#) and [Credit Reports](#), Minnesota Office of Attorney General.

Two online modules: The Minnesota Department of Human Services collaborated with the University of Minnesota, Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, to produce the following modules:

- **Caseworker Responsibility and Credit Reports for Youth in Foster Care** discusses the roles and responsibilities of caseworkers in various levels of government and tribal agencies in the event of a credit report on a foster youth's record. The module is on the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare website at <http://z.umn.edu/creditworker>.
- **Understanding Credit: An Online Training for Youth in Foster Care** assists youth in foster care with managing and monitoring their credit, and gain understanding of the importance of their credit report. The module is on the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare website at <http://z.umn.edu/credityouth>.

[Federal Trade Commission for Consumer Information](#) on resolving credit issues.

Lutheran Social Service (LSS) of Minnesota has credit counseling services in eight Minnesota communities: Duluth, Brainerd, Eveleth, St. Louis Park, Mankato, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Willmar. Contact LSS at 888-577-2227, or the website at www.lssmn.org/debt to make appointments at any of the locations.

Appendix H

Social and recreational

4-H Clubs at <https://4-h.org/>, youth development organization

Casey Life Skills at <https://caseylifeskills.secure.force.com/> has curricula resources that caregivers can use to teach youth relationship, communication and social skills.

FosterClub at <https://www.fosterclub.com/> has information by and for foster kids.

PFLAG, Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays, at <https://pflag.org/>, is the first and largest organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people, their parents and families, and allies.

[MinnesotaHelp.info](https://www.minnesotahelp.info/) at <https://www.minnesotahelp.info/>, search for local websites for scouting, 4-H, boys and girls clubs, YMCA camps, parks and recreation, and community education. It has a wealth of community resources and information statewide.

Community education programs, libraries and resources regarding culturally competent services are resources.

KidsHealth at <https://kidshealth.org/> includes information for teens on relationships and emotions.

Girlshealth.gov at <https://www.girlshealth.gov/> is a girls' health website that includes information on relationships.

The Dibble Institute, at <https://www.dibbleinstitute.org/>, is a comprehensive curricula, an effective tool for teaching relationship skills to teens and young adults. The courses cover all essential concepts in an integrated format that maximizes learning. Content is research-based, specifically designed for teens and young adult audiences, and ready to use. Relationship Smarts PLUS 4.0 is a 13-lesson, evidence-based relationship skills curriculum for young teens.

Appendix I

Establishing and maintaining connections

FosterClub resources include:

- [Transition Toolkit](https://www.fosterclub.com/) at <https://www.fosterclub.com/> with a section on permanency
- [Permanency Pact](https://store.fosterclub.com/permanency-pact/) at <https://store.fosterclub.com/permanency-pact/> free tool to support permanency for youth in foster care – life-long, kin-like connections between youth and a supportive adult.

Minnesota Department of Human Services resources include:

- [Relative-Kinship Search and Placement Considerations](#) document, DHS-4524 (PDF), mn.gov/dhs
- [Adoption of Children in Foster Care](#), DHS 7024A, provides information on key differences between adoption and transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.

[Youth Connections Scale](#) at cascw.umn.edu/.

University of Minnesota, “Expanding the Circle,” etc.umn.edu/ a curriculum intended for Native American youth, used in a group or one-to-one. The website includes many other resources.

Mentor Minnesota at <https://www.mentormn.org/> builds capacity of programs, systems, and policies to strengthen youth mentoring relationships. The organization also provides a search function to find the most appropriate mentor for youth.

[Mentoring.org](#) at <https://www.mentoring.org/> works with a network of state and local mentoring partnerships to leverage resources and provide support and tools.

Project Butterfly at <https://www.projectbutterfly.com/> offers a workbook and other resources for girls and young women of African descent.

National Resource Center for Youth Services, <https://nrcys.ou.edu/> has a catalog of resources.

Appendix J

Ideas for use of STAY funds

Create life skills trainers

- Train foster parents or group home staff to teach life skills
- Hire a coordinator to develop independent living plans, or conduct life skills training groups
- Contact neighboring county agencies to pool funds to hire a coordinator
- Pair an adolescent with a trained mentor who will teach life skills and act as a support person
- Recruit volunteers and community resource providers to present topics within their specialty to youth groups.

Purchase life skills training

- Purchase life skills training from an area nonprofit or private agency
- Use county family service aides to teach life skills, such as money management
- Network with county providers of self-sufficiency programs for adults or special needs clients who may be able to expand or modify services to fit the needs of older adolescents
- Cover the cost of attending a summer camp that incorporates living skills into its activities.

Support education/employment

- Facilitate high school completion by providing tutors for youth who need help.
- Use the Minnesota Career Information System at WorkForce Centers, many high schools and area technical colleges.
- Connect youth with WorkForce Centers for career assessment and counseling.
- Cover post-secondary entrance exams and application fees.
- Pay travel and child care costs for foster parents who accompany youth on post-secondary school tours.
- Arrange employment opportunities through city, county or state employment offices. Pay for necessary work uniforms and other employment supports.
- Find professionals in the community who are willing to let a youth shadow them on the job.
- Arrange innovative job opportunities, where youth can learn employment skills and explore career opportunities. Use STAY funds to cover or subsidize wages.
- Pay U.S. citizenship application fees.
- Assist youth to complete a resume.

Assist with money management

- Purchase credit counseling services for youth whose credit reports reveal serious issues and/or identity theft.

Help with transportation

- Purchase a bicycle to reduce the need for a vehicle
- Purchase bus cards
- Arrange driver's training (discuss car insurance and issues of liability with parent/s and foster parents)
- Pay for driver's license fees
- Help youth pay for car insurance or car repairs, if they need a car to get to a job or school
- Pay volunteers, coordinators, or foster parents to transport adolescents as they work on completion of their independent living plan.

Additional free or low cost ideas

- Consider combining STAY with children’s mental health funds, special education funds, etc. to offer a life skills training program.
- Consider combining funding and staff time with juvenile court services to offer a life skills training program.
- High schools and alternative schools may give youth high school credit for attending a life skills training group. Ask to use classroom space, gym or pool.
- Public health nurses may provide health screening, information, referral, training and counseling on a wide variety of health issues.
- Victims of sexual assault services and battered women’s shelters may provide information and training.
- Law enforcement officers may talk to youth about topics such as drugs, self-defense, risks of gang involvement, or working in the law enforcement field.
- Lawyers or judges may talk with youth about legal rights, including what to do if arrested.
- Tenant unions or property owners may volunteer to train youth about tenant rights and responsibilities, leases, what to look for in a place to live. This may include tours of apartment buildings.
- Universities and technical colleges have campus tours exploring dormitory living, financial aid and special services.
- Youth who have aged out of placement may volunteer to co-facilitate a life skills group, or talk to youth about what they need to know before they leave care.
- County extension services are connected to the University of Minnesota and 4-H youth development. It has a collection of training materials. County extension staff can teach money management and many other home management skills. Some county extension offices hire staff whose area of expertise focuses on youth.
- Churches are good places to hold life skills training sessions with youth groups. They have kitchen facilities so youth can prepare meals. Some churches have small emergency funds. Congregations may be willing to donate something youth or youth group needs.
- Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE – part of community education) is a resource for minor parents. It is a positive, fun, supportive way to learn about the development of babies and preschoolers.
- Area employers may talk with youth about qualities employers look for when they hire, give a tour of their business, conduct mock job interviews, allow interested youth to job shadow an employee.
- A car sales person may take youth on the lot after hours to look at cars and learn how to buy a car wisely.
- An insurance agent may speak with youth about need for medical, auto, and renter’s insurance, and what it costs.
- Local service clubs (such as Jaycees or Lions Club) may make a donation to a life skills training program, give scholarships to youth, act as mentors, involve youth in fundraisers and share proceeds.
- Local restaurants may provide gift certificates, free or reduced meals for youth meetings.
- Public libraries have computers youth can use. A librarian will speak with youth about how to use the library as a research tool. Get youth library cards.
- Thrift stores and garage sales are good field trips for teaching youth how to live on a tight budget.
- City, county and state parks are inexpensive places for many activities with youth, including picnics, camping, swimming, hiking, campfires, softball and cross country skiing.
- YMCA and YWCA may give free passes so youth can use the gym and pool. They may donate free memberships. The Ys have summer residential camps statewide for teens and offer scholarships for low income, at-risk youth.
- Youth might join senior citizen groups in activities or volunteer to help them with projects. Seniors may mentor, tutor or teach youth life skills, tell stories about their struggles in life, or offer youth jobs such as lawn mowing or household chores.
- Ask friends to teach youth skills such as cooking, basic car maintenance, home repairs, fishing, photography and parallel parking. Ask for help in teaching youth how to balance a checkbook; file a tax return; administer first aid; apply for college, financial aid or a scholarship; appreciate other cultures or how to paint a room.

Appendix K

Notice of Foster Care Benefits Past Age 18

Agency:

Youth:

Parent/legal guardian:

Foster parent/caregiver:

Guardian ad litem:

This notice is to inform you that foster care benefits are available past age 18. Agency staff is responsible to provide you, your parents or legal guardians, guardian ad litem, and your foster parents this notice six months before your 18th birthday.

Remaining in foster care

You have a right to remain in foster care if you:

- Have been living in foster care (including a group home or residential care) immediately before your 18th birthday. You have the right to remain in foster care up to your 21st birthday.
- Stay in foster care past your 18th birthday, you must tell your caseworker before turning age 18.

Eligibility to remain in foster care past age 18

If you choose to remain in foster care past age 18, you must meet one or more of the following conditions. You must provide your caseworker with documentation that you are doing at least one of the following:

- Completing high school or a program leading to a GED diploma
- Enrolled in post high school education
- Participating in a program or activity that will help you find employment
- Working one or more jobs for at least 80 hours per month
- Unable to do any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

Foster care placement past age 18: A foster care placement past age 18 may include:

- Staying in your current foster care placement.
- Moving to a relative's, or supportive adult's home.
- Living on your own with supervision, such as a college dorm or your own apartment. If attending college, you can return to a foster care placement for holidays and school breaks.

Tell the caseworker, your guardian ad litem, and/or the court that this is what you want to do. A good time to tell the court is at your annual hearing before age 18.

Independent Living Plan

If you remain in foster care, your caseworker will meet with you to update or create an independent living plan that addresses needs related to housing, education, employment, health care and medical insurance, money management, transportation, social skills and recreation, and anything else to help you live on your own when you leave foster care by age 21.

Deciding to leave foster care

If you decide to leave foster care, your caseworker will meet with you within 90 days before you leave foster care to develop a Transition Plan that provides information on housing, health insurance, education, mentors and support services, work force supports, help finding employment, and resources to call in a crisis. The plan will include information about a Health Care Directive, a document you sign that names someone else to make decisions about medical care for you. This is in case there is a situation where you cannot make your own decisions, or because you do not have, or want, a relative who would be authorized to make health care treatment decisions for you.

Vital documents

Before leaving foster care, your caseworker and foster parents/caregivers are responsible to assist you in getting the following documents before you leave foster care:

- Social Security card
- Driver's license or state identification card
- Birth certificate
- Green card or school visa, if needed
- School records and education report
- Copy of your social and medical history
- Medical and dental records
- A list of your medical, dental and mental health providers
- Contact information for your siblings, if in foster care.

State wards' right to return to foster care

As a state ward:

- You have the right to return to foster care any time between the ages of 18 and 21.
- If you want to return to foster care, contact the social service agency you worked with while in foster care and request to return to care. Agency staff will ask you to sign an agreement saying that this is what you want, and you must meet at least one of the eligibility conditions. You and your caseworker will develop a specific Independent Living Plan to meet your needs. The agency must give you room and board, and counseling, as needed.

Non state wards' right to return to foster care

If you were in foster care and want to return to care:

- You must have been in placement six consecutive months before your 18th birthday, or discharged on runaway status after your 15th birthday. You should contact the social service agency you worked with while in foster care and request to return to care.
- If agency denies your request to return to care, you have a right to appeal its decision.
- You must sign an agreement that you want to return to foster care and meet at least one of the eligibility conditions. Your responsibility is to work with your caseworker to develop a plan and actively work on that plan.

Notice of termination of foster care

If you are in foster care between the ages of 18 up to 21 and no longer meet eligibility criteria, the social service agency must give you a written notice that foster care will terminate 30 days from the date notice was sent. Within 15 days of receiving the termination notice, you or your guardian ad litem may file a motion asking the court to review the termination of foster care. You cannot be discharged from foster care until the motion is reviewed by the court. A copy of the termination notice is sent to your attorney, if any, foster care provider, and your guardian ad litem.

Right to appeal

You have the right to appeal:

- If the social service agency denies your request to return to foster care. If you have questions about filing an appeal, call 651-431-3600 or 800-657-3510.
- You have 30 days to file an appeal. In some situations, you can have 90 days. Write a letter that states you want to appeal the social service agency's decision. Ensure you include your full name, address, and phone number so the Appeals Office can contact you. Mail letter to:

Appeals Office
P.O. Box 64941
St. Paul, MN 55164-0941

Fax to: Appeals Office, 651-431-7523

Signatures

Youth

Date

Caseworker

Date

Appendix L

Voluntary Foster Care Agreement for Youth Ages 18 – 21

[Minn. Stat., Chapter 260C.451]

Purpose: This agreement is between the county social service agency and youth who requested to resume foster care benefits after age 18, and meets required conditions.

THIS AGREEMENT IS BETWEEN _____, an agency duly authorized
Agency

by the state of Minnesota to place children in out-of-home care, (hereinafter called the “agency”),

and _____, residing at _____
Youth’s name Youth’s address

_____, county of _____, Minnesota.

Placement

Youth: I agree to live in the foster care setting, which may be a supervised independent living setting authorized by the agency. I also agree that, in order to remain in foster care through the agency, I must be:

1. Completing a secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential
2. Enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education
3. Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment, or
4. Employed for at least 80 hours per month.

If I am incapable of doing any of the activities described above due to a documented medical condition, I agree to cooperate with the agency to document my condition on an ongoing basis.

Agency: Agrees to provide continued foster care services to you, whether placed in licensed foster care, residential care, or in an authorized supervised independent living setting.

Planning

Youth: I agree to participate in development of the case plan, including an independent living plan (ILP) with the agency, attend all case plan reviews, and keep the agency informed about how to contact me at all times.

Agency: Agrees to develop a written plan, including an independent living plan (ILP) with you, review the plan as required, provide notification of case plan reviews, and provide you with a copy of the plan.

Services

Youth: I agree to follow through with my responsibilities as outlined in the case plan and ILP, participate in identified services, be present at visits with my caseworker, and keep the agency informed of my needs.

Agency: Agrees to provide foster care maintenance payments, case management, at least monthly face-to-face visits, and other services, according to plan/s. Maintenance is a monthly payment to support board, room, clothing, and other expenses.

Permanent connections

Youth: I agree to visit and keep in touch with siblings, family, and other important adults.

Agency: Will establish a plan with you, and make efforts to seek life-long permanent connections, which may include reunification or adult adoption.

Verification of eligibility condition/s

Youth: I agree to provide and cooperate with establishing and maintaining verification/s of my eligibility condition/s. I understand that the agency is required to verify my enrollment in school, employment, participation in a program to promote employment, or medical condition that affects my ability to work or go to school.

Agency: Agrees to provide foster care services and maintenance for you, as long as eligibility condition/s and associated verification/s are maintained.

Financial resources

Youth: I agree to use the financial supports provided for the purpose intended.

Agency: Agrees to notify you, if placed in an authorized supervised independent living setting and are directly receiving foster care maintenance, or your caregiver, of the amount of payments, and provide advance notice of any change in payments. Notice of payment change would include information about how to appeal.

Youth: You may object to having your credit reports requested by the agency. It must document your objection in the case file.

Agency: Also has responsibility to work with you to obtain credit reports from the three national consumer credit reporting agencies annually until discharged from foster care. Caseworkers must assist in interpreting reports and resolving inaccuracies.

Medical insurance

Youth: I agree to apply for Medical Assistance, and provide information needed for continued eligibility.

Agency: Will bill health insurance or Medical Assistance for covered medical services. The agency will assist in applying for Medical Assistance and understanding coverage. You may be responsible for the cost of medical services not covered by insurance.

Authorization for release of medical and educational records

Youth: I agree to sign the necessary releases for the agency and facility/foster home to have access to my education, medical, and mental health records.

Agency: Will maintain data privacy of the above information according to state and federal laws.

Termination of the agreement

Youth: I agree to terminate the agreement by notifying the agency of my desire to end this agreement.

Agency: Agrees to provide written notice if your voluntary placement agreement will be terminated. If you do not maintain eligibility for continued foster care, the agency agrees to offer a 90-day transition plan prior to discharge. The notice will include your right to a fair hearing and appealing the decision

Signatures

I agree to the provisions contained in this voluntary foster care placement agreement. My and the agency representative's signature below is the agency's legal authority to resume foster care benefits.

SIGNATURE OF YOUTH
DATE OF AGREEMENT

SIGNATURE OF AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE
TITLE OF AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE

Appendix M

The 90-day Transition Plan for youth discharged after age 18

Youth:

Worker name:

Worker phone:

Youth's strengths:

Describe how youth was involved in developing the plan:

Identify other individuals involved in developing the plan:

Housing, education and employment

Where will youth live upon discharge?

Identify youth's plans for education upon discharge:

Identify youth’s plan for employment and/or work force supports upon discharge:

Health Information

Primary/secondary	Contact number	Insurance provider	Health plan/type	Policy number	Group number

List health care provider’s accepting youth’s health care coverage:

Health care directive

The plan must include information on the importance of designating another individual to make health care treatment decisions on behalf of youth if they become unable to participate in these decisions, and they do not have, or do not want, a relative otherwise authorized to make these decisions. The plan must provide youth with the option to execute a health care directive as provided under Minn. Stat., Chapter 145C. If youth want to complete a Health Care Directive, a suggested form is in Minn. Stat., section 145C.16.

Per the Affordable Care Act, youth who have left foster care, or will be leaving foster care on their 18th birthday or later are eligible for Medical Assistance (MA) up to age 26. To qualify for this MA category, an individual must meet the following criteria: Is under age 26; was in foster care in Minnesota; had foster care end at age 18 or older, and enrolled in MA or MinnesotaCare at the time foster care ended. Former foster care youth who want to opt for this category of MA need to apply through the MNsure website.

[Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148, section 2004; Minn. Stat., section 256B.055, subd. 17]

List medical, dental, mental health and eye appointments scheduled after discharge:

Appointment type	Date	Time	Provider	Phone	Address

Supportive services and connections with adults

Specify services for youth, including relationships with supportive adults upon discharge:

What relationship and support can youth expect from their foster parents/caregivers upon discharge?

Person/s identified as youth’s supportive adult/s who will always be able to get in touch with youth:

Name	Relationship	Home phone	Cell phone	Email address

Vital documents

Vital documents: The responsible social service agency must provide the following vital documents to youth, at no charge, prior to discharge. [Minn. Stat., section 260C.203 (e)(3)]

- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- State identification card or driver’s license
- Tribal enrollment identification card

- Contact information for youth’s siblings, if they are in foster care
- Contact list of youth’s medical, dental and mental health providers
- Youth’s social and medical history, as required in Minn. Stat., section 260C.219 (e), and defined in Minn. Stat., section 259.43
- Medical records
- Dental records
- Green card, school visa or other immigration documentation
- School records and education report
- If male, has registered for Selective Service
- Credit report

Contacts

Contact information: Provide youth with identified resources/contacts if they need information, or help with a crisis through age 21.

Type	Name	Address	Phone/email

Signature setup

Both youth and caseworker sign the plan. Provide a copy of the plan to youth and foster parents or caregiver.

Signatories

Youth:

Caseworker:

Supervisor:

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling your county worker. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at 800-627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call 877-627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.

Appendix N

Self-sufficiency Preparation Checklist

Reproduce for caregivers.

If working with youth age 14 or older, this checklist can be a good place to start when helping them become more self-sufficient.

Whether youth is returning home, entering an independent living program, or choosing another option, preparing for self-sufficiency will increase their chances of success.

Answer each statement with a “Y” for yes and an “N” for no if task is completed. If unsure of an answer, consider it a no. The no answers will provide a list of specific tasks or areas of training that need addressing if youth is to function independently.

Youth’s name

Date

Forty-eight Things You Can Do To Help Someone Get Ready for Independent Living. (Adapted from New Life Youth Services, Cincinnati, Ohio)

1. Help youth get a certified copy of their birth certificate.
2. Help youth get a Social Security card and a wallet in which to carry it.
3. Enroll youth in a school program in which they can succeed.
4. Determine if youth is eligible for Medical Assistance.
5. Help get youth a picture identification card.
6. Help youth get copies of medical records.
7. Start a “Records Book” that will include youth’s important papers.
8. Help youth put together a family scrapbook or “life book.”
9. Help youth open a bank account.
10. Teach youth how to write and cash checks.
11. Take youth for a dental check-up.
12. Develop a relationship with a dentist willing to see youth when they leave foster care.
13. Take youth for a physical.
14. Develop a relationship with a doctor willing to see youth when they leave foster care.
15. Help youth renew contact with family members.
16. Help youth develop at least one friendship.
17. Line youth up with a good counselor.
18. Take youth to join a local recreation center.
19. Teach youth new ways to have fun.
20. Connect youth with a church group.
21. Help youth find a job, or a better paying job.
22. Look up possible resources in the phone book, newspaper, online, etc.
23. Help youth learn skills through an independent living skills workbook.
24. Teach youth how to read a map. Give them a map of the city they live in. Take them on a city tour.
25. Teach youth how to use the bus system and read bus schedules.
26. Buy youth an alarm clock and teach them how to use it.
27. Help youth get a library card and show them how to use it.
28. Help youth get a driver’s license and price insurance.
29. Role-play contact with police, bank tellers, doctors, landlords, etc.

30. Role-play several different styles of job interviews.
31. Help youth put together a resume and fact sheet with information needed for filling out applications.
32. Make a list of important telephone numbers.
33. Teach youth how to cook five good meals, and how to store food.
34. Teach youth how to use coupons and comparison shop.
35. Teach youth how to read a paycheck stub.
36. Teach youth how to deep clean a kitchen and bathroom.
37. Teach youth how to use an oven and microwave.
38. Take youth to a session of adult court, e.g., traffic, criminal, etc.
39. Teach youth how to find and retain a lawyer, and when to get one.
40. Help youth understand a rental or lease agreement.
41. Teach youth how to do, or at least get help, for yearly tax returns.
42. Teach youth how to write a letter and use the Post Office.
43. Help youth develop telephone communication skills.
44. Explain to youth tenant and landlord rights.
45. Teach youth how to find a safe, inexpensive place to live.
46. Work with youth on how to budget money.
47. Work with youth on how to find and get along with a roommate.
48. Talk to youth often about their feelings; what it might be like to be on their own.

Appendix O

How caregivers can help adolescents meet their needs

Reproduce for caregivers

Youth need to feel a sense of safety and structure – how caregivers can help:

- Be emotionally, physically and sexually safe for youth in your home.
- Compliance with rules and structure is important, but is not the *purpose* of placement.
- Tell youth directly that they are safe — that adults do not engage in sexual behavior with youth in their home. Literally, have the conversation.
- Be honest with youth regarding decisions made about them.
- Include them in decisions.
- Help youth talk about how they perceive the system and adults' ability to keep them safe.
- Help youth learn how to advocate for themselves.
- Remember that consistent and rigid are not the same thing.

Youth need to experience active participation, group membership and belonging – how caregivers can help:

- Help youth to articulate the types of relationships they want with various significant people in their lives (family of origin, foster family or extended family/friends).
- Encourage youth to get involved in cultural events in the community.
- Offer to help youth create a Life Book if they do not have one.
- Support participation in clubs/organizations/teams — even if there are concerns about youth's behavior. Find ways to make it possible to participate.

Youth need to develop self-worth through meaningful contributions – how caregivers can help:

- Find opportunities for youth to give back in ways that are of interest to them.
- Look for opportunities for youth to participate in community action/organizing around issues of interest to them.
- Discuss the purpose of giving back — help youth connect it to a feeling of value to others.
- Explicitly verbalize times when they make a contribution.
- Non-stop, over-the-top enthusiasm about youths' capacity to contribute in meaningful ways.

Youth need to discover self, gain independence, and gain control over their life – how caregivers can help:

- Do not use the threat of kicking youth out of the home as a means of enforcing compliance.
- Share power.
- Talk with youth, not about them or at them.
- Do not over-react to experimentation.
- Remember that weird hair or funky clothes are not a reflection of the caregiver or quality of parenting.
- Talk with youth about what control over one's life looks like in the adult world.

Youth need to develop significant, quality relationships with peers and at least one adult – how caregivers can help:

- Let youth see a variety of people.
- Talk honestly with youth about the pros and cons of their friends.
- Encourage involvement of other adults in youth's life.
- Talk with youth about what real friendships look like.
- Seek creative ways to let youth be in contact with others viewed as a bad influence. Chances are that those youth are also looking for structure and an interested, available adult.
- Connect youth with a mentor.

Youth need to discuss conflicting values and form their own – how caregivers can help:

- Talk openly with youth, especially in cross-cultural placements, about different world-views.
- Make a point to ask youth how they feel about areas where values seem to be different — encourage them to explain how they arrived at their thinking and share personal values or beliefs with them.
- Help youth to learn how to think critically about issues outside themselves.
- Help them to see there are many ways to walk through the world, and their world-view is shaped by their unique experiences.
- Become educated about sexuality and gender, and information is conveyed to youth.

Youth need to feel pride of competence and mastery – how caregivers can help:

- Encourage, encourage, encourage.
- Provide rides.
- Teach basic life skills in the home.
- Expose youth to music and the arts.

Youth need to expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible – how caregivers can help:

- Role model how to have fun.
- Engage in a variety of activities.
- Discuss the idea of positive views of the future.
- Help them tell their stories from a point of view of resiliency.
- Help them understand the idea of hope.

