What's YOUR region?

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This material was developed by the

Professional Development Program,
Rockefeller College, University at Albany,
through **The Research Foundation of State University of New York,**
under a training and administrative services agreement with the

New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

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Pub. 5098 (Rev. 5/14)

Need to Know Series:

Planning for Your Transition to Self-Sufficiency

Youth In Progress

New York State Foster Care Youth Leadership Advisory Team

"The mission of Youth In Progress is to enhance and advance the lives of today's and tomorrow's youth by supporting their sense of self and responsibility. To do this, we pledge to educate everyone involved in the various systems Youth In Progress members represent to the realities of this experience."

Being on your own can be scary and challenging but it doesn't have to be. Planning for your transition from foster care to self-sufficiency is a great opportunity to help you prepare for your future. Your official Transition Plan will help you think about and plan for what you will need to have in place when you leave care.

Foster care youth in New York State helped to develop the Transition Plan Form.

What is a Transition Plan?

A Transition Plan is a youth-driven planning document. You will have the opportunity to decide how detailed you want to make your Transition Plan. The plan covers important topics that you need to address to help you make a successful transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. We will cover these topic areas later in this pamphlet.

The Transition Plan is a form that consists of two parts. The first part includes questions that will guide you and your worker to discuss your plans as you prepare to leave care. There is a place for your worker to write down the options you discuss and your plans upon discharge. There is also a place on the form for your comments/feedback and signature. The second part provides a quick snapshot of your personal discharge plans.

Your Transition Plan is finished when both parts of the form are complete. If you are leaving care on a trial discharge status, the Transition Plan must be updated at your final discharge. Final discharge means that you are no longer in the care and custody of the local Department of Social Services (LDSS). If you are over 18 and want/need to return to care, you cannot if you are on a final discharge status.

Resources

Check out **www.youthinprogress.org** to obtain the following resources:

- Transition Plan: Parts 1 and 2 – Under "Federal Regulations," click on "Transition Plan."
- Need to Know Series: Pregnancy and Parenting Issues for Youth in Care – Under "Need to Know Series," click on "Pregnancy and Parenting Issues for Youth in Care."
- Need to Know Series: College and Vocational Planning – Under "Need to Know Series," click on "College and Vocational Planning."

Helpful Tips to Keep your Baby Safe – Click on the following link: **www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5008text.asp**

Try to obtain copies of all the documents listed on the Transition Plan form. Keep all important documents in a safe place because replacing them is a long and difficult process.

Workforce Supports and Employment Services:

Think about the activities that you like to do and consider your skills and talents. Then, set goals toward a career, education and/or training, and a job. These goals will help you become self-sufficient. There are services that can help you plan for a career and get a job.

Pregnant/Parenting Youth:

If you are pregnant and/or a parent, you should talk with your worker about services you will need, such as pregnancy care and parenting skills, or services for your child(ren), such as early intervention programs and health care.

Other (Safety):

If you have a safety concern when you leave care, you should talk with your worker about developing a plan to keep you safe.

Your Transition Plan is an exciting opportunity to think ahead and plan for your success!

When Should Transition Planning Begin?

A Transition Plan is required by federal law and New York State regulations for all youth leaving foster care who are 18, 19, and 20 years of age. Your worker is required to begin discussing your Transition Plan with you at least 180 days (6 months) prior to your scheduled discharge date. Your Transition Plan must be completed 90 days (3 months) prior to your scheduled discharge date.

If you have not yet started working on your Transition Plan, you should ask your worker about beginning this process.

"Being discharged shouldn't feel like you are graduating into the unknown. The earlier you begin your transition plan, the more success you'll have with being able to adapt to adulthood."

— Youth in Care

Transition Plan Topic Areas:

It is important to know and discuss your plans when you leave care. The topics below will help guide you.

Trial Discharge:

Trial discharge is required for at least 6 months for every child discharged to Another Planned Living Arrangement (APLA). (For youth 18 to 21, trial discharge may be extended at each scheduled permanency hearing, until the youth reaches the age of 21,

provided the youth consents to the extension.) Trial discharge means the youth remains in the custody of the LDSS while living in the community. The purpose of trial discharge is to enable a youth to return to placement in foster care without applying to re-enter, for example, should a youth 18 years of age or older become homeless. The youth must consent to any trial discharge.

Re-entry into Foster Care by Former Foster Care Youth:

Former foster youth who are 18 years of age or older, up to age 21, may apply to re-enter foster care under certain circumstances. Youth are required to receive notice about his/her right to re-enter care, which includes the name and contact information of his/her attorney. A youth may apply within 24 months to re-enter care, with application made to the LDSS or court. LDSS must provide preventive services to any youth requesting to re-enter foster care when providing preventive services may avoid the youth returning to care. Youth must consent to enrollment in and attendance at an appropriate educational or vocational program as a condition of re-entry.

Medicaid Coverage:

If you are discharged from foster care on or after your 18th birthday, you may be eligible for Medicaid coverage provided:

- You are under 26 years of age;
- You were in the custody of a Commissioner of a local department of social services or the Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services on your 18th birthday; AND
- You were receiving Medicaid coverage while in foster care.

Ask your caseworker if you have questions about Medicaid coverage.

Education/Vocational:

Set goals and make a plan for your continued education or vocational training. The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program provides resources for eligible youth up to $5,000 per year to attend a post-secondary educational or vocational training program. There are also other financial resources available to you. Talk with your caseworker and caregiver for help in this area.

Opportunities for Adult Permanency Resource(s) or Mentor(s):

Identifying at least one adult permanency resource is one of the most important factors for your successful transition into adulthood. An *adult permanency resource* is a caring adult committed to providing you with emotional support, advice and guidance, who assists you as you make your transition from foster care to responsible adulthood.

Continuing Support Services:

You may need to access a variety of services once you leave care, such as mental health, physical health, transportation, and housing. Your worker is required to help you set up the "aftercare" services that you will need.

Important Documents/Access to Case Record:

There are a number of documents that you may need when you leave care. For example, in order to qualify for financial aid for college, you will need documentation of legal immigration status. To obtain a job, you will need to know your Social Security number.