Re-Entering Foster Care for Youth Aged 18–21

Are you between the ages of 18 and 21 and struggling with housing or homelessness?

You may be able to re-enter foster care and get the support you need.

> I left care at 16 or older and would like to return to care before turning 21. What do I need to know?

Section 1

What does re-entry into foster care mean? How do I know if I can re-enter foster care?

There is help if you need it! Find out what re-entry means and if you qualify.

Section 2

What are the steps I need to take to re-enter foster care and who can help me?

Find out who can help you and what steps to take to re-enter foster care.

Section 3

What resources may be available to me if I decide to re-enter foster care?

If I re-enter foster care, where will I live? Do I have to go back to my foster home?

You may be wondering what re-entering foster care might be like and what resources are available.

Section 4

What if I am not able to re-enter foster care?

There are resources that may be able to give you the help you need if you are not able to re-enter foster care but still need support.

YouthInProgress.org |

What does re-entry into foster care mean?

If you were a youth in foster care who left care at the age of 16 or after and you are under the age of 21, you may be able to re-enter foster care.

The OCFS policy 22-OCFS-ADM-04 provides details for re-entry into foster care for eligible young adults seeking a safe and stable place to live. To see this policy go to https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2022/adm/22-OCFS-ADM-04.pdf.

How do I know if I can re-enter foster care?

You may re-enter care if you answer yes to **all** of the following questions:

- Are you between the ages of 18 and 21? **AND**
- Were you in foster care on or after your 16th birthday? **AND**
- Are you currently struggling with housing or homelessness? **AND**
- Are you seeking a safe and stable place to live?

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What are the steps I need to take to re-enter foster care and who can help me?

There are a few different places you can start to begin the process of re-entering foster care.

Begin by:

- Talking to your former caseworker

- Calling the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) where you used to be in foster care (You can find the contact information for the LDSS here https://ocfs.ny.gov/directories/localdss.php)

- Calling the **OCFS Human Services Call Center** at 844-454-6569

Don't hesitate to use your voice to advocate for yourself by telling them you are aware of the OCFS policy 22-OCFS-ADM-04 that allows you to re-enter foster care if you are eligible.

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What resources may be available to me if I decide to re-enter foster care?

If I re-enter foster care, where will I live? Do I have to go back to my foster home?

You may get additional supports that could help you to:

- Find and maintain safe, stable housing

- Finish school (high school, vocational programs, and college)

- Access health care—including sexual and reproductive health care

- Access mental health services

- Get assistance receiving copies of important documents, such as an ID and birth certificate

- Get support in finding and keeping a job

- Develop independent living skills, such as how to manage money, file taxes, cook, etc.

There are a few different options if you choose to re-enter care.

You might be able to live:

- With a foster family, perhaps with a family you've lived with before or a kinship setting with a family member

- In an apartment, perhaps with a roommate

- In a dorm room at college if you are already there or if you anticipate attending college (you don't have to return to a foster home)

- In a group setting with others (such as independent living programs)

- Somewhere else, with the help of a caseworker

Ask your caseworker questions about your options. The most important thing is that you use your voice to communicate where you would like to live.
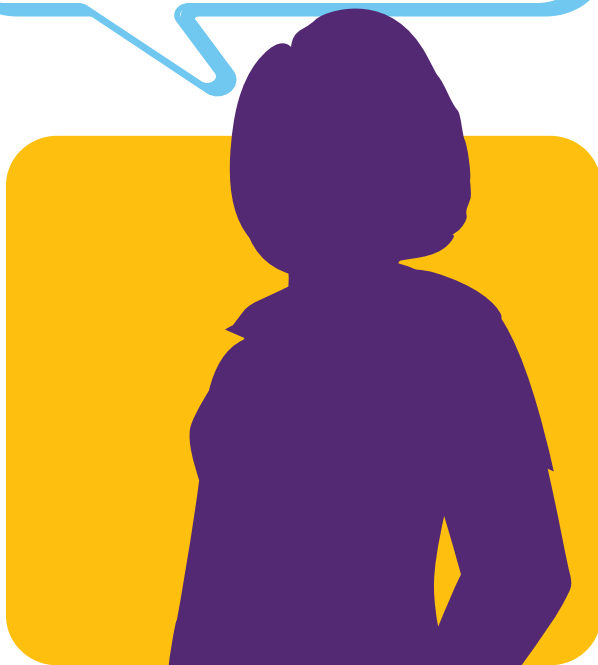
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Section **4.1**

What if I am not able to re-enter foster care?

There are many resources and supports to help you if you are not able to re-enter foster care.

The *Youth in Progress Need To Know Series: Your Transition to Self-Sufficiency* covers topics such as housing, health insurance, education and vocational supports, and employment. It provides both state and region-specific resources. You can find the **Youth in Progress Need To Know Series** at https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series.

Resources

Covering Multiple Areas of Need

- iFoster: Resources
  http://ifoster.org

- United Way: Confidential help 24/7
  https://www.211.org

Housing

- *Youth in Progress Need to Know Series: Housing*
  https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series/need-to-know-series-housing

- New York State Housing
  https://www.ny.gov/services/housing

- New York State Section 8 Housing Programs
  https://hcr.ny.gov/section-8-housing-programs

- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance: Housing and Support Services (HSS)
  https://otda.ny.gov/programs/housing/providers/default.asp?region=Albany#result

- New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program
  https://otda.ny.gov/programs/emergency-rental-assistance

- Residential Tenants' Rights: Renter's Rights and Protections Under New York State Law
  https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/tenants_rights.pdf

Resources (continued)

Health

- NY State of Health: The Official Health Plan Marketplace
  https://info.nystateofhealth.ny.gov

- OCFS: Affordable Care Act
  https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/sppd/health-services/affordable-care-act.php

- Department of Health Medical Records FAQ
  https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1443/

- Planned Parenthood
  https://www.plannedparenthood.org

- CSS Community Service Society: Navigator Network
  https://www.cssny.org/programs/entry/community-service-society-navigator-network

- Workforce Development Institute (WDI): Child Care Subsidy Program
  https://wdiny.org/Explore-Our-Work/Child-Care-Subsidy-Program

Education/Vocational

- New York State Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)
  https://etv-nys.smapply.org

- Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
  https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

- Youth Build
  https://youthbuild.org

- New York State Education Department: Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI)
  http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/foster-youth-college-success-initiative

- New York State Education Department: Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)
  http://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/higher-education-opportunity-program-heop

- The State University of New York: Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
  https://www.suny.edu/attend/academics/eop

- New York State BOCES
  https://www.boces.org/contact-a-boces

- SUNY Educational Opportunity Centers
  http://www.ucawd.suny.edu/eoc.php

- New York Gear Up
  https://gearup.ny.gov/college-readiness

Resources (continued)

Support Services

- New York State Food Pantries
  https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/food-pantries

- Youth.GOV Financial Empowerment Toolkit
  https://youth.gov/feature-article/financial-empowerment-toolkit-0

- Lambda Legal: Making the Case for Equality
  https://www.lambdalegal.org

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
  https://www.thehotline.org

- LGBT National Help Center
  http://lgbtnationalhelpcenter.org

- Q Chat Space: A Community for LGBTQ+ Teens (age 13-19)
  https://www.qchatspace.org

- Love is Respect
  https://www.loveisrespect.org

- Advocates for Youth
  https://www.advocatesforyouth.org

- The Trevor Project
  https://www.thetrevorproject.org

- New York State Multiple Systems Navigator
  https://www.msnavigator.org/guidance

- Safe Harbour Programs, search by county
  https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/human-trafficking/program-highlights.php?county=none#listing

Workforce Supports and Employment Services

- New York State CareerZone
  https://www.careerzone.ny.gov/jz/views/careerzone/index.jsf

- Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
  https://www.onetonline.org

- GetMyFuture
  https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx

- Jobzone
  https://www.jobzone.ny.gov/jz/views/jobzone/guest.jsf

- New York State Department of Labor: Youth
  https://dol.ny.gov/youth

- Department of Labor: Local Workforce Development Boards, Contact Information for all Workforce Development Services in 33 Counties
  https://dol.ny.gov/lwdbs

- Job Corps
  https://www.jobcorps.gov

- New York State Education Department: Adult Career & Continuing Ed Services
  http://www.acces.nysed.gov
  http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr