



Preparing Youth for Success: The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

What is the John H. Chafee program?



The Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood is a resource that you may use while in care and when transitioning out of care.

Exiting out of placement (or leaving care) can be scary and intimidating. The right tools, resources, and support can make independence more exciting. Each county uses Chafee funds in different ways to help youth achieve self-sufficiency. The Chafee resources listed below mainly focus on providing a bridge to become an independent and successful adult.

Section 1

[What should I know about the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood?](#)

There are many resources in New York State that can support your pathway to independence while in foster care and when you are exiting out of care. Understanding what Chafee is and if you are eligible can be important to your success.

Section 2

[How do I keep my Medicaid after I transition out of care?](#)

Youth may be eligible to keep Medicaid insurance coverage until age 26. This covers vision, dental, primary doctor, some mental health services, and emergency room visits.



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

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Section 3

[Is there housing support for me under Chafee that will assist me to begin living on my own?](#)

It is important to know that counties use Chafee funds in different ways and are mainly used to assist a young person to achieve self-sufficiency. This may include helping you pay for the security deposit for an apartment or help you pay for utilities such as electric, heating, or water service.

Section 4

[How does the Education and Trainer Voucher \(ETV\) Program help with college or vocational training?](#)

If you are interested in attending college or a vocational (skill based) school, then you should learn about the Education Training Voucher (ETV) and how it can help you afford college or other needs you may have while in college.

Section 5

[How can Chafee services and resources help teach me how to be more independent?](#)

Aging out of foster care can be scary and exciting at the same time. Under Chafee, there are Independent Living Services that can help you in many areas. There are also supports that New York State counties have for learning life skills.

Section 6

[What does Trial Discharge and Re-Entry mean to me if I am turning 18?](#)

A trial discharge is a safety net while you explore independence for your future. Learn more about Trial Discharge and Re-Entry into Foster Care.

Pro Tips

- Medicaid is a form of health insurance. You will need this to go to the emergency room, doctor, dentist, and/or therapy.
- The term “transitioning” is used to describe the process of aging out of or exiting foster care between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. In New York State, youth age out of foster care at 21. At the age of 18 your foster care agency must get your consent (agreement) to remain in care until 21 if you do not want to exit out of foster care at 18. When you consent to remaining in foster care you also consent to being in school or employed unless you are unable to do either.



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What should I know about the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood?

Chafee is aimed at helping you develop life skills like money management, finding an apartment, preparing for employment, and provides academic supports while in high school and college/vocational training (tuition covered by ETV). Keep in mind that every county participates in Chafee differently and provides different supports.

Background

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee program) provides money to states, territories, and Indian tribal entities (states) to help youth transition to adulthood.

Moments in Chafee History

- Formerly known as the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, it was created by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.
- The Chafee policy had a major change in 2002 to include separate funding for the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program.



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How to find out more:

Since every county provides money and support differently, there is no one way that Chafee is used. The best way to learn more about the Chafee Program is to ask your caseworker about the supports your county offers under this policy. To be eligible you need to have been in foster care in New York State on or after the age of 14.

Here are some questions that can help you speak with your caseworker to find out what Chafee supports are available to you:

- I want to reside in my own apartment when I turn 18 but still stay in foster care; can Chafee funds help with that transition?
- I need to take the General Educational Development Test (GED® Test) and get my High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma; can you help me with that?
- Is there academic support available for me to graduate high school?
- I want to go to college, but I cannot afford it; are there funds available to help me while I am in college?
- I need help building my independence and learning how to be on my own; how can Chafee support me?
- I want to get a job, but I do not know where to start. How can Chafee support me?





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How do I keep my Medicaid after I transition out of care?



Health insurance is a plan that people use for medical care. Health insurance covers doctors' appointments, emergency room (ER) visits, hospital stays, and medications.

Foster youth in New York State have Medicaid insurance, which is paid for by the federal and state government, until you turn 26. This is available to you as a current and former foster care youth.

If you left care on or after your 18th birthday and you are under the age of 26, regardless of your income and/or resources, you are still eligible to be provided Medicaid insurance.

In order to receive Medicaid, you must be a U.S. citizen or have proof of satisfactory immigration status, as well as documentation that 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. Your Medicaid card will be provided upon discharge. Medical contacts should be documented in your transition plan and a copy should be provided to you. You will be able to remain enrolled until you reach age 26.

Remember, you must update your county if you have any address changes to guarantee your Medicaid insurance continues.

Pro Tip

Medicaid is a form of health insurance. You will need this to go to the ER, doctor, dentist, vision and/or therapy.



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Additional resources to better understand your Medicaid coverage:

- To locate a doctor, use this link: NYS Provider & Health Plan Look-Up <https://pndslookup.health.ny.gov>
- For more about the federal health insurance program, use this link: OCFS Former Foster Care Youth and the Affordable Care Act <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/sppd/health-services/affordable-care-act.php>





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Is there housing support for me under Chafee that will assist me to begin living on my own?

Housing is extremely important, especially if you are beginning to transition out of foster care. Some housing options may include living with family or friends, in a dormitory on a college campus or living on your own. The Chafee program can be a resource for you to begin living independently. The funds available should not be a long-term solution, but they can help you to get stable housing.

Room and Board may be available through your local department of social services. This is for housing support and is not related to college. You must be a former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who left foster care on or after the age of 18 to be eligible for these services.

These services, when available, may help you:

- pay your rent and/or utilities
- obtain furnishings for your apartment
- cover your security deposit

There are school attendance and/or employment requirements. Contact your caseworker to find out more.

If you are being discharged from foster care with a Permanency Planning Goal (PPG) of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), you may



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be eligible for a preventive housing subsidy of up to \$300 a month for up to three years. This is if you are prepared to exit care and need assistance with housing rent payments. To qualify, you need to have been in foster care for at least 90 days.

Housing Vouchers

Youth who are 18-21 years old and preparing for independent living, may also qualify for a Section 8 Rental Assistance Voucher. Check with your caseworker to see if you are eligible. Not every county has Section 8 Housing.

There are other housing voucher programs for youth that have experienced foster care. Youth 18-24 can receive a maximum of 36 months of housing vouchers through the Foster Youth Independence (FYI) initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Additionally, through HUD, youth 18-24 can receive a maximum of 36 months voucher through the Family Unification Program (FUP). If you are seeking assistance with housing in NYC you may be eligible to apply for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Talk with your caseworker to learn more about eligibility and to explore the application steps for all housing voucher options.

Things you can do to prepare for living on your own:

Know your options.

Talk with your caseworker to discuss where you want to live and what kind of apartment you want. You may want to live in your own studio apartment, or you might want to live with roommates. You might be planning to live with relatives.

Save money.

You will have to pay your first month's rent and a security deposit (which is usually one month's rent). Sometimes landlords want a security deposit, first month's rent, and the last month's rent in advance, be sure to ask.

Get references.

What are references? These are people that can speak to the kind of tenant you will be. Basically, the landlord wants to know that you'll pay the rent on time, be a nice neighbor and that you won't have loud parties, or damage the apartment. Get references from someone like a teacher, a staff member, a job supervisor, or any adult that has been in your life. Make sure you have that person's phone number to give to the landlord.

Start searching for housing at least 6 months BEFORE you are ready to leave foster care.

You can find apartment listings in newspapers or on online sites. Be careful about listings that request



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you to send money before you see the apartment. This may be a sign of a scam. Always request a walk through of the apartment and ask questions.

Narrow down your housing priorities.

Look for what you need, not just what you want. Consider things like how close it is to your job, school, grocery stores, the post office, public transportation, etc.

Ask the landlord if utilities are included in the rent.

Utilities are electricity, water, heat, and can also include garbage removal. If utilities are not included, make sure to account for that in the total cost of rent.

Read the lease.

Make sure you understand the lease before you sign it. Never sign anything unless you absolutely understand and agree to the terms. For example, if the lease says, "no pets" and you get a cat, you can get kicked out.

Pro Tip

If there's anything wrong with the apartment, like the lights or windows are broken, talk with the landlord to make sure they will be fixed before you move in.





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Additional resources to help you understand housing, including your rights and the supports that are out there to help you in New York State:

- Housing Information Pack—This is a resource through NYS that can help you figure out what the best housing option is for you and gives a number of resources and advice.
<https://www.msnavigator.org/transition-to-adulthood/information-packs/housing-information-pack>
- OCFS Youth Housing Safety Checklist
<https://ocfs.ny.gov/publications/OCFS-Pub5529.pdf>
- The Standardized Supervised Setting Readiness Assessment (OCFS-5561) is a tool you may find helpful when calculating your expenses. Go to <https://www.ocfs.ny.gov> and type in the name of the tool in the search bar to download it into a word document.
- 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/>
- Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi
- Family Unification Program (FUP)
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family
- Residential Tenants' Rights Guide: Renter's Rights and Protections Under New York State Law
https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/tenants_rights.pdf
- United Way: Confidential help 24/7
<https://www.211.org>



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How does the Education and Trainer Voucher (ETV) Program help with college or vocational training?

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program is a financial assistance program available for youth currently in foster care, youth that left care after turning age 14, or youth adopted or entered KinGap after turning age 16.

- If eligible, you can receive up to \$5,000 per year to attend a college or vocational school (skill-based school).
- ETV funds may be used for needs that are not covered by other financial aid such as books, computer supplies, daycare expenses, food, federal student loan repayments (remember these are the loans you must pay back), transportation, and rent.
- ETV funds are on a first come-first serve basis, so it is a good idea to apply after you fill out your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- The ETV application must also be renewed each year. To initially receive ETV you must apply before turning 21 years old. Funds can be used for five years or until you turn 23 years old.

Pro Tip

There are additional supports related to college preparation under Chafee Independent Living Services. They are designed to help you enter or complete a 2 or 4-year college or vocational program. These are not ETV funded services.



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Services may include:

- classes for test preparation: i.e., Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Test (ACT)
- college counseling
- application fees for college
- your caseworker can help with loan applications
- your caseworker can help you apply for financial aid
- college tours

Contact your caseworker to see if any of these services/resources are available to you!

Resources

- To learn more about ETV and how to apply, click the link here: New York State Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program <https://etv-nys.smapply.org>
- Foster Club is a national network for youth in foster care and includes information and resources for youth in care and former foster care youth, including information about Chafee and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) <http://www.fosterclub.com>





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How can Chafee services and resources help teach me how to be more independent?



There are certain Chafee supports that counties offer that are called Independent Living services (IL). IL services offer a variety of supports that can help you become more independent and be able to successfully transition into adulthood.

Outlined below are some IL services that your county may be able to offer you.

- Budget and Financial Management
- Career Preparation
- Academic Support

Budget and Financial Management assistance includes but is not limited to the following types of training and practice:

- Living within a budget
- Opening and using a checking and savings account
- Balancing a bank account
- Developing awareness about how to keep your sensitive financial information private and secure
- Developing smart shopping skills
- Accessing information about credit, loans, and taxes
- Filling out and filing tax forms

Career Preparation are services that can help you develop the ability to find, apply for, and retain a job. Career preparation may include the following types of instruction and support services:

- Vocational and career assessment
- Career exploration and planning
- Guidance in setting and assessing vocational and career interests and skills
- Help matching interests and abilities with vocational goals
- Job seeking/placement support
- Identifying potential employers



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- Writing resumes
- Completing job applications
- Developing interview skills
- Job shadowing
- Receiving job referrals
- Using career resource libraries
- Understanding employee benefits coverage
- Securing work permits
- Retention support, including job coaching, how to work with employers and other employees
- Understanding workplace values such as timeliness and appearance
- Understanding authority and customer relationships

These may also include obtaining drivers' permits or licenses, driving lessons, and/or auto insurance.

Academic Supports are services designed to help you complete high school or complete classes needed for your General Educational Development Test (GED® Test) so that you can get your High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma. These could include:

- academic counseling
- tutoring
- help with homework
- reading and writing training
- study skills training
- help to access educational resources

Note: academic support does not include tuition for a public or private high school, transportation to and from school, or college support. (See Section 4 to learn about college financial supports)

Keep in mind that these supports are also dependent on the county you live in. You can refer back to the questions prepared in Section 1 to help you speak with your caseworker about Chafee supports.

Resources

- Here is a link to the Chafee policy that outlines additional independent living services that may be available to you: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2022/lcm/22-OCFS-LCM-15-ATTACHMENT-B.pdf>
- Casey Life Skills Assessments—This site includes free online assessments for youth at various ages. It includes the ability to develop individualized plans for life skills training using online resources. To go to the assessment, visit <https://www.casey.org/casey-life-skills/>



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What does Trial Discharge and Re-Entry mean to me if I am turning 18?



Trial Discharge

Before your final discharge (exit) from foster care, you have the option of a trial discharge. Your county department of social services (DSS) must offer a trial discharge period for at least 6 months. Under certain circumstances, the trial discharge period may be extended until you reach age 21.

During the trial discharge period, even though you may be living in your own place in the community, DSS will still have custody of you. If you become homeless, the agency will work to find housing for you or give you the option to re-enter foster care. Trial discharge is encouraged to ensure supports are provided, should they be needed.

If you are 18 or older and on final discharge, you cannot return to foster care unless you apply for re-entry (see Re-entry into Foster Care in this section).

A trial discharge is required for:

- All youth being discharged to Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement with Permanency Resource
- All youth ages 16 and older who have been in foster care for 12 out of the past 36 months

During trial discharge, your caseworker should meet with you at least once a month. If you are over 18 years of age and attending an educational or vocational training program at least 50 miles away, the caseworker may contact you by telephone or mail.



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Re-entry into Foster Care

Re-entry is a policy created to support youth that have exited foster care but may need to re-enter due to housing challenges and an overall need for support. 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>
- Check out the Youth in Progress Need to Know Series titled: Re-entering Foster Care for Youth Aged 18-21 <https://youthinprogress.org/resources/digital-printable-handouts/need-to-know-series/>

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?

Speak with your previous caseworker or call your local DSS to begin the conversation about what is best for YOU, which may be entering back into foster care.

