



NEED TO KNOW SERIES

One-Pager

Keys to Your Success: Essential Documents

What Are My Essential Documents?

- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
- Medical Records (Immunization Record, Referrals)
- Health Insurance Card
- Education Records (e.g., IEP or 504 Plan, Transcripts, High School Diploma)
- Credit Report
- Identification Card (e.g., driver's license, non-driver ID, Green Card)
- Foster Care Verification Letter (letter to include date placed in care and date discharged from foster care)
- Tribal Documents (if applicable)

Why Are These Documents Important?

- Proof of identity for jobs, bank accounts, housing, voting, and applying for education or vocational training.
- Required for securing government benefits like SNAP, HEAP, and health coverage.

When Should I Get Them?

- Your caseworker should start gathering your documents as part of your Transition Plan by age 17 ½.
- You should receive all your essential documents before you are discharged from care.

Where Can I Get Them After Exiting Care?

- **Birth Certificate:** Vital Statistics Office
- **Social Security Card:** Social Security Administration
- **Medical Records:** Contact your healthcare providers
- **Health Insurance Card:** Local Department of Social Services or Medicaid office
- **Education Records:** School or institution where you graduated
- **Credit Report:** www.AnnualCreditReport.com
- **Identification Card:** Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- **Green Card:** USCIS website or contact their office
- **Foster Care Letter:** County Department of Children and Family Services

Pro Tips

- Did you know that having all of your essential documents is one of your rights in care under the New York State Bill of Rights for Children and Youth in Care?
- It's your right to receive a yearly credit report while in care. This can help you keep your identity secure!

