

21 THINGS YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOSTER CARE

- 1. **Test your Life Skills. Take the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA).**
This assessment will help you see where your strengths and needs are when it comes to skills for living on your own. Contact your IL Coordinator for more details.

- 2. **Join the Independent Living Program (ILP).**
Want FREE help applying for college, finding financial aid, getting scholarships, landing a job, and learning skills for life after foster care? How about some MONEY for renting your first apartment? Then the Independent Living Program (ILP) is for you! It's designed to help youth prepare for life on their own after foster care. To find the local ILP near you, check out our website www.georgialip.org and search for your region or your county listings.

- 3. **Build a transition plan.**
Put together a team of supportive adults in your life and build a transition plan. Utilize your Written Transitional Living Plan to help you develop your plan. Life Coaching services available through www.loveliving.org

- 4. **Get Solid: Understand What Permanence is about...and get it if you can.**
You may have heard the word "permanence," but do you know what it is? Can you list the five types of permanency? Talk to your caseworker and find out what your permanency plan is (every youth should have one), or visit www.fosterclub.com.

- 5. **Surround yourself with a safety net. Make a PACT with Supportive adults.**
Youth that are successful when they transition out foster care have one thing in common: They have supportive adults in their lives that they can count on. Talk to a supportive adults in your life about a PACT. Learn more at www.fosterclub.com.

- 6. **Find out about Chafee.**
You may be eligible for assistance for paying for rent or other cost associated with living on your own. Talk to your caseworker, Independent Living Coordinator or visit www.georgialip.org.

- 7. **Get a rental reference from your foster home.**
Consider creating a rental agreement with your foster home or group home for the last few months you're in foster care. If you are a good tenant, they could provide a reference for your first apartment. A reference can provide information about on-time rent payments, cleanliness and respect for the property and other tenants.

- 8. **Secure a place to live, have a backup plan.**
Transitioning out of foster care to homelessness is never a good idea. Homelessness includes living in your car, camping, and even sacking out on a couch at a friend's house. There's plenty of help in locating housing, but you have to do some of the legwork. Talk to your caseworker, and your independent living coordinator.

- 9. **Get your social security card and birth certificate.**
These personal documents can be particularly hard to get if you wait...Have your caseworker get you your own ORIGINALS of these items before you leave care.

- 10. **Get a state-issued photo-ID.**



21 THINGS YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOSTER CARE

You'll need photo ID for lots of things when you are living on your own; to rent an apartment, get a job, travel on an airplane, and much more. Even if you don't have a driver's license, make sure you get state issued identification.

□11. Get a copy of court documents that prove you were in care.

You may need this proof to qualify for special benefits, such as scholarships and financial Aid for higher education.

□12. Open a bank account (and savings too).

If possible, open a bank account EARLY (at least a year before you leave foster care) So that you have time to practice money management (it can be surprisingly tough!) Georgia's Department of Human Resources' Independent Living Program (ILP) has contracted with Catalyst for CARE Inc. to provide Individual Development Account Program (IDAs) for youth, between the ages of 14 and 21, who are or have been in foster CARE in the state of Georgia. Money that youth save and deposit in their IDA can be matched at a rate one-to-one, up to \$1,000. To learn more about the IDA please visit they visit www.catalystforcare.org.

□13. Save Money.

Most young adults are taken by surprise by the cost of living on their own. Have an adult help you work out a monthly budget for life after foster care. Try to save enough money to cover three months of the budget, plus the move- cost for your first apartment.

□14. Get a high school diploma or GED.

Once you're on your own, it can become very difficult to concentrate on school because you'll be busy making money to pay your way. Try to finish Getting your GED or High School diploma while you're still in foster care- before you pile on all the extra worries of supporting yourself.

□15. Find out about money for higher education.

The federal government has handled down millions of dollars for scholarships and Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) for foster youth! Best of all, in most cases this money can help pay for a Trade or Vocational School, housing, transportation, books, fees and other cost related to education. Find out how to access this money in your region or county by visiting www.georgiailp.org.

□16. Get a job.

This one's a no brainer; of course you need a job before you set out on your own! Getting a job can be tougher than think. even if you are receiving funds from other government sources, no ones is really self-sufficient until they earn their own living. It's best if you can gain work experience while you are still care.

□17. Get medical coverage. See a doctor.

Before leaving care check with your caseworker or your Independent Living Coordinator to find out about the Chafee Medicaid. If you will be losing your health coverage, make sure your see a doctor for a check-up before you leave care. Make sure all your shots are up to date and that you are in the best health you can be in.

□18. Get mental health coverage. See a therapist before leaving care.



21 THINGS YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOSTER CARE

Youth transitioning from foster care may be eligible for mental health coverage. If you will be losing your mental health coverage, you may want to see a counselor before you leave care and get help coping with the stress and anxiety most youth have when transitioning out foster care. And if therapy is good enough for all those stars in Hollywood, then there's got to be something to it, right?

□19. Take daily living skills classes.

Get set for adulthood learning skills for life after foster care. Independent living Program (ILP) or caseworker about classes offered. Check out classes at your local community College. Or as your foster parents to work with you on life skills (they can download an entire book of ideas called **Ready, Set, Fly!** at www.caseylfeskills.org)

□20. Build and independent living portfolio.

Keeps a professional portfolio containing the following: complete sample job application and apartment rental application, resume, education records awards and achievements, and copies of personal documents. For ideas, check out the FYI binder at www.fosterclub.com or contact your IL Coordinator for a Transition Packet

□21. Find out if you can stay in care until you're 21.

You may have a lot to gain. What have really got to lose. You may want to make a list of the of the pros and cons of staying in care or leaving. If you take a close look, you may just find out that there are many advantages to staying in care. If you prove your maturity and readiness, you may even be able to live on your own while you are in foster care-talk to your caseworker, Independent living Coordinator or judge or visit www.georgiailp.org.

