

An 18th birthday is a major turning point. Legally, 18-year-olds are adults, but it is unrealistic to expect youth to be ready for adult responsibilities overnight. For this reason, youth are encouraged to stay “in care” on a voluntary basis until their 21st birthday. Choosing to stay in care means that youth will have continuous assistance and support while pursuing higher education and employment. Youth will continue to have a DCS Specialist who will work with them to document their goals and to help provide the services and supports necessary to achieve those goals.

When a youth is approaching 18, what does it mean to “Sign a Voluntary?”

It means youth are willing to “Actively Participate” in a case plan (recognized as the Voluntary Foster Care Agreement) that they create with their DCS Specialist. “Actively Participate” means youth are showing efforts to move themselves forward in life. If they have a plan that includes graduating high school or college, the DCS Specialist will make sure they are going to classes, completing schoolwork and asking for help if they need it.

Is there any help for youth who choose to be independent and do not want to sign a Voluntary Foster Care Agreement?

There sure is! Youth can participate in our Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP). TILP staff (not DCS) will help youth create a service plan that can help them find a job, get into school, or find a place to live. Youth have to meet with their TILP worker on a regular basis. Once they reach their goals, they can leave the program or talk to their TILP worker about re-entering care if they are eligible and want more long-term support. To get involved with TILP just call 480-247-1413.

Can youth “re-enter” later, even if they choose not to stay in care at 18?

Sometimes youth leave foster care when they turn 18 for various reasons. Whatever the reason, a youth may discover that their original plan didn’t work out and they need assistance. This can occur through “re-entry.” The youth’s YAP case can be reopened and a DCS Specialist assigned. Re-entry can occur through the youth’s successful participation in TILP. Most importantly, re-entry is not just a check, it’s about a youth being ready to take personal responsibility for their life and working towards their goals.

Department of Child Safety
<https://dcs.az.gov/services/young-adult/independent-living-program-and-young-adult-program>

Arizona’s Children Association
www.arizonaschildren.org

Fostering Advocates Arizona
www.fosteringadvocatesarizona.org

Health Care Information
www.healtharizonaplus.gov

Arizona Education & Training Voucher
www.fc2sprograms.org/arizona



Did you know?

Did you know? Youth who were in Foster Care at age 16 and older are eligible for ETV, AZ Tuition Waiver and the TILP program! Even if youth has been adopted, entered into a guardianship, or went home after the age of 16, they can participate and receive some form of assistance until their 23rd birthday.



Youth may continue living with a foster parent or in a group home until they are ready to move out on their own. Some youth will reside in dorms while attending school, or rent a room with a relative or friend. Some youth who are ready and eligible may receive a subsidy to assist with living costs.

Myths vs. Facts

Myth: When a youth turns 18, they will get to live in a special apartment complex for young adults in foster care.

Fact: When youth turn 18 they can continue to live where they are now. When they are ready to live on their own, they can work with their DCS Specialist, mentors and/or Skills Trainers who can assist them in finding an apartment or other place they want to live and can afford.

Myth: I hear youth get a monthly check after they turn 18 years old.

Fact: Not exactly, but if youth work with their DCS Specialist and they both feel the youth is ready and showing efforts to move themselves forward (following their case plan, working and/or going to school) they can apply for the subsidy program.

Myth: DCS will pay for post secondary education plans/college.

Fact: There are lots of different ways to pay for college and we are here to help. The Pell Grant will assist with the cost of tuition and books. The Education Training Voucher (ETV) is a grant available to youth who have been in foster care at 16 or older and are attending an accredited post-secondary or vocational school. AZ also has a tuition waiver for state schools.



Arizona Department of Child Services

Questions? Contact us:

DCYFPermanencyYouthServicesUnit@azdes.gov

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Arizona Young Adult Program



**The Support Young Adults
Need for a Strong Future!**



Arizona Department of Child Safety