



OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER YOUTH IN CARE

All youth receiving services past their 18th birthday must be legal residents of the state. Youth who will turn 18 while in the Arizona foster care system have the opportunity to remain in care or to leave care on their 18th birthday. If a youth chooses to leave foster care, he/she may request assistance through the "after care" program, called the Transitional Independent Living Program or TILP. Youth may also request to **return** to foster care anytime prior to age 21 if he/she exited care at age 18 or older.

Any legal resident of Arizona who is under age 21, and who was previously in any state or tribal (federally recognized) foster care program at age 16 or 17 may also request aftercare services through the TILP. Only youth who actually turn 18 while in the **Arizona State** foster care system may return to care. Turning 18 can be a very stressful time. It is important to have a good plan in place, whatever the youth's decision.

All youth who will reach age 18 while in the **Arizona** foster care system are pre-enrolled into health care services through the state Medicaid program. This program is called AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System). A special category of eligibility was created specifically for youth who turn 18 while in the Arizona foster care system. It is called **Young Adult Transitional Insurance or YATI**. Youth may choose a health plan and must sign the application. There are no income restrictions and this coverage is available until the 26st birthday. Youth do not have to stay in foster care to receive this coverage, but **must** ensure they update their contact information and complete an annual re-determination with the agency responsible for this program (Family Assistance Administration or FAA).

Legal residents of Arizona who are under 21, and who were in any state or tribal (federally recognized) foster care program at age 16 or older may apply for funding for post-secondary education and training through the **Education and Training Voucher (ETV)** program. Youth do not have to remain in care to apply for this aid, but must be enrolled in an accredited post-secondary education or training program to receive these funds.

The following pages provide more information about the options and services available to help youth achieve their goals. Be sure to visit the state website at www.azdes.gov/dcyf/ilp.

Remaining in Care

Youth are encouraged to stay "in care" on a voluntary basis until their 21st birthday. "In care" means foster care, which is any type of out-of-home placement (foster home, group home, Independent Living Subsidy, etc.) supervised by the Department of Child Safety (DCS). Choosing to stay in care means youth will have continuous assistance and support while pursuing higher education and/or employment training. Youth will continue to have a case specialist who will work with him/her to develop an agreement that identifies goals, services, and support necessary to achieve the goals. This agreement is reflected in the "case plan", which is reviewed every 6 months and adjusted as needed. Youth are expected to participate in any combination of education and employment activities, and therapeutic services necessary to help him/her achieve their goals. Youth have more responsibilities, make more decisions, and have more freedom as they transition to adulthood.

Many youth who choose to remain in care attend college or employment training programs (in state or out of state). Some youth are still working to complete high school or earn their GED before they move on to college or trade school. All youth are expected to pursue education and/or employment activities, and to develop life skills that will help them to build positive and supportive adult relationships; and to become self-sufficient. Youth age 18 and older may continue to receive DCS supervision and foster care services (IL Subsidy) regardless of marital status.

Youth may continue living with a foster parent or in a group home until they are ready to move out on their own, as long as licensing and/or contracting requirements are met. Many young adults receive a monthly "independent living" subsidy to live on their own. Some youth reside in dorms while attending school, or may board (rent a room) with a relative, friend or through a community shared living program (such as Job Corps, Transitional Living Programs, etc.). Youth may also choose to share expenses with a roommate(s) while renting an apartment or simply rent on their own. All services end on the 21st birthday. Youth may choose to stay in care for a while and then leave, but ask to return to care. Eligible youth may re-enter foster care (the Independent Living Subsidy Program) any time prior to the 21st birthday. (See the section on "Returning to Care" below.)

Independent Living Subsidy Program (ILSP)

The Independent Living (IL) Subsidy is a foster care option that is **ONLY** available to youth who are in the Arizona foster care system and age 17 or older. The IL Subsidy is a monthly living allowance, issued in the youth's name. The Department determines monthly rates and the schedule of payments. This subsidy is available until the 21st birthday. Youth who exited other state's foster care systems, or tribal foster care systems at age 18 or older are **NOT** eligible for the IL Subsidy, as it is an Arizona foster care placement type.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) is financial assistance to help pay the cost of post-secondary education and training programs. Students must be legal residents of the state, and be eligible to enroll in an accredited post-secondary program. Youth must also be under 21 years of age, and previously in any state or tribal foster care program at age 16 or older, or currently in care in the Arizona system. Students may receive up to \$5,000 per year through the ETV, depending on resources available. The amount of the voucher may **NOT** exceed the "total cost of attendance". Applications may be made at www.statevoucher.org, or contact the Arizona ETV Coordinator at AZ@statevoucher.org.

Arizona Tuition Waiver

The Arizona Tuition Waiver is available to foster youth and former foster youth attending public Arizona State Community Colleges, and Universities. Young Adults can apply for the Tuition Wavier as they apply for ETV at www.statevoucher.org

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- You must be a current or former foster youth who:
- was in foster care on or after your 16th birthday, OR
- was adopted from foster care with the adoption finalized after your 16th birthday.
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen.
- Your personal assets (bank account, car, home, etc.) cannot be over \$10,000.
- Youth who are in good standing and progressing towards earning a credential, can remain eligible for continued funding until their 23rd birthday.

After the first academic year youth who receive a tuition waiver scholarship will need to annually complete at least thirty hours of volunteer service during the previous academic year

Education Specialists

Arizona has a State Education Specialist who provide transitional youth with additional assistance to ensure they have the opportunity to reach their academic potential and success. The Specialist assist in preparing education plans for graduation from High School or to obtain a GED. Assistance can be provided for high school students, such as supporting problems with credit transfers when changing schools, connecting with school resources, as well as external resources for academic support, (I.e. tutoring, etc.) The Specialist also support youth to explore and prepare for entry into postsecondary education programs and to identify available financial aid opportunities to each youth.

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Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP)

The state provides "aftercare" services to legal residents of Arizona age 18-21 who were in any State or Tribal foster care system at age 16 or older. These former foster youth typically are living on their own, and no longer have an open service case with the DCS or with another state's foster care program. TILP services are delivered through community based providers who assist youth to develop an individualized service plan. The service plan must identify goals specific to employment, education, life skills and other areas necessary for self-sufficiency. Some financial

support is available (dependent on resources) to assist youth pursue education, employment, therapeutic services, etc. A TILP case manager will meet with youth to discuss his/her needs and goals. TILP services may be provided as often as needed but not past the 21st birthday. Youth must actively participate in the service plan and demonstrate personal responsibility to receive services.

If youth find they are in need of long-term support and assistance, he/she may want to consider returning to care. Youth must be working cooperatively with the TILP case manager in order to make arrangements to return to care. "Returning to care" means the youth will transition from working on a service plan and receiving services through the TILP case manager to working on a case plan and receiving services from a DCS case manager. The advantage of returning to care is the long-term support DCS can provide, which may include the independent living subsidy.

Re-entering Care

If youth are legal residents of the state and left the **Arizona** state foster care system at 18 or older, they may request to return to care. This is accomplished by contacting the local TILP provider. Youth are required to work with the aftercare provider for a period of time to demonstrate acceptance of personal responsibility for their part of the plan, to address immediate needs, and to develop a plan for transition back into DCS care. The TILP provider will contact the local DCS IL Coordinator with the request for Re-Entry. The local DCS IL Coordinator will arrange a meeting to coordinate the Re-Entry. Youth may request to re-enter care anytime prior to the 21st birthday.

All youth are required to demonstrate "acceptance of personal responsibility" for their part in creating the individualized case plan and in actively participating in services. For more information on program policies, rights and responsibilities, please refer to Chapter 5 of the State Child Welfare Policy Manual at:

<https://extranet.azdcs.gov/DCSPolicy/>

Any Questions/Concerns may also be referred to:

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