



Supporting Youth Who Transition out of the Foster Care System at Age 18

Youth who leave the foster care system at age 18 form a special group in our society. These youth have been legally children of the state and have had difficult childhood experiences leading to many finding the challenge of independence daunting.

If the plan is for the youth in your home is to move out on his or her own after turning age 18 or graduating from high school, you and your child should work on a transition plan to help prepare for the move. Here are some things you can do to help youth transitioning to adulthood:

1. Advocate for government agencies and local communities to expand services to these adolescents and support a move for extending foster care until 21 years of age.
2. Begin teaching your children in foster care from an early age about caring for themselves.
 - Teach them about cleaning, cooking and caring for their clothes.
 - Teach them how to shop for groceries, clothes, and household items.
 - Talk about house and car maintenance.
 - Teach them about money, how to save, how to use a checkbook, and how to invest.
 - Talk about insurance, payments, and using a bank.
 - Help them navigate the world of dental, medical and mental health care. Teach them to make and keep appointments and how to manage the necessary follow-up.
3. Talk about the importance of education and what is needed for different kinds of work. Talk about college placement tests; encourage them to go to technical college and four year college fairs to learn about careers. Talk about your own work.
4. Elicit the help of school counselors, community agencies and other resources in these tasks. Make sure that your foster child knows these agencies and community resources and how to access them.
5. Help your youth maintain a life book with legal, birth and family history facts, dates and information. Have them include important documents such as their birth certificate and social security card. Make copies of these if you can in case they lose them.
6. Few of us turned 18 and negotiated adulthood alone without much trial and many errors. Remember that when dealing with these young persons and add to that the life history that makes uneven footing for transitioning into adult roles.
7. Most important: Remember that the first signifier of success for youth who age out is a strong relationship that he or she has with a supportive adult. Be available if you can. If that is not possible, help the youth identify adults whom they trust and teach them how to maintain that relationship



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Resources Available From the FCARC

Lending Library:

(Go to: <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/advancedsearch.asp> for any of the resources below)

Aging Out: With No Direction Home (VHS)
Roger Weisberg & Maria Finitzo. Sexual abuse and suicide survival story. (Documentary)

Aging Out: Declaration of Independence (VHS)
Roger Weisberg & Vanessa Roth
8 yr old feels the system won't let him be independent. (Documentary)

Aging Out: Bound and Determined (VHS) Roger Weisberg . A girl escapes an abusive home, has a child, a job, and hopes for college. (Documentary)

Aging Out: Ready or Not (VHS) Roger Weisberg & Vanessa Roth . Abused by her step father, separated from siblings, veteran of foster care, excels in high school and enters college. Lacking support and fighting addiction, she suffers a breakdown and leaves the University. (Documentary)

Aging Out: Case Closed (VHS) Roger Weisberg . A woman feels the only thing that she can control is keeping her child out of foster care. (Documentary)

On Your Own Without A Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations (Book)
Osgood, Wayne and Foster, Michael and Flanagan, Constance; Ruth, Gretchen

On Their Own: what Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System (Book) This resource tells the compelling stories of 10 young people whose lives are full of promise, but who face economic and social barriers

stemming from the disruptions of foster care. This book serves as a call for action to provide youth in foster care the same opportunities on the road to adulthood that most of our youth take for granted--access to higher education, vocational training, medical care, housing, and relationships within their communities.

Out On My Own...Now What? (Book) Whether you're a full grown adult and have already made your share of costly mistakes, or a struggling teenager anxiously awaiting your opportunity to "experience" life's trials and tribulations, this book has something for everyone. Avoid embarrassment and learn the secrets of managing the "real world." Eliminate the fear of the unknowns of living on your own and create the life skills that fit your life. Let this book prove to you that life is fun, exciting and rewarding.

Other Resources:

Publication of the Anne E Casey Foundation with comprehensive overview of aging out
<http://www.aecf.org/publications/advocasey/fall2001/index.htm>

Comprehensive List of Programs and Resources for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care from the Child Welfare League of America
<http://www.cwla.org/programs/fostercare/agingoutresources.htm#top>

This is a comprehensive link to the Wisconsin Technical College System
<http://www.witechcolleges.com/>