

# Roadmap to Independent Living

Ages 13-26



## 13

If youth spend even one day in court-ordered OHC after the age of 13, they are eligible for independent student status on the FAFSA. This means if they go on to post-secondary they will not have to claim anyone else's income but their own when applying for financial aid. Visit [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov) for more information.

Youth in care after the age of 13 should receive an allowance and hands-on opportunities to practice money management.

### KEY

- Education
- Employment
- Transportation
- Finances
- Housing
- Permanent Connections
- Cooking
- Healthcare
- Case Management
- Requirements for Workers
- Considerations for Workers
- Youth Recommendations

## 14-18

The Permanency Plan must include an Independent Living (IL) plan for youth 14+ who have spent 6 months or more in court-ordered OHC. The IL plan should be youth-driven, informed equally by the results of the youth's IL assessment and the youth's goals and interests.

The agency must provide the youth with a copy of his/her credit report annually. Workers will receive notification of credit reports via e-mail, and any reports found for the youth will be uploaded to eWiSACWIS. If there are inaccuracies in the credit report, the agency must make efforts to correct the errors.

## 14

Talk to all youth about the importance of building a strong credit history.

Start the youth out with some easy meals if they don't know any already (i.e. grilled cheese, mac and cheese, stuff that uses a microwave to cook).

## 15

Start talking about jobs. See if the youth would be interested in a mock interview to see how it goes. Give them an idea of what to bring to their first interview. Show them how to create a resume! If they have one, look it over and give them tips and tricks to make it better. Make sure the youth knows how important a resume will be growing up. Make sure they know to save it and update it regularly. Remember, there are additional supports for foster youth through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Contact your local job center for more information.

Talk about healthy relationships. Help the youth understand the difference between bad and good ones. Do not tell the youth what to do in their relationships. Just show them the difference with examples.

Consider enrolling youth in driver's education.

## 16

Did you know that if a youth is employed at age 16 they are much more likely to work as adults? Have the youth decide if they are ready to work or not. If they decide they are not ready, don't worry! Ask what additional supports they would need to feel prepared for employment and follow up by making the appropriate referrals.

Talk about Foster Club's Permanency Pact. Explain the importance of having an informal support network. Permanency Pacts can help guide/begin the conversation about who can and will offer support to the youth after they leave out of home care.

Work with youth on budgeting. Creating and updating a budget regularly can help avoid financial emergencies.

Upgrade to cooking meat and help them understand when it's done and not done and what's safe and not safe in the kitchen setting. Talk about seasonings the youth likes.

## 16-18

Youth placed in court-ordered subsidized guardianship, or adopted after the age of 16 remain eligible for some Independent Living services until age 21. They also remain eligible for Brighter Star, Wisconsin's ETV funding, up to age 23.

Have youth complete the NYTD Survey within 45 days of their 17th birthday. Make sure their address is up-to-date in eWiSACWIS for future survey outreach.

If a youth is expected to be in out-of-home care at 17, consider exploring the possibility of a Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placement.

Youth who age out are eligible for post-secondary supports through Brighter Star, Wisconsin's ETV fund. These funds can be used at technical colleges, 4-year universities, and other training programs as long as they are accredited or pre-accredited.

## 17

Speak to the youth about a savings account and look at saving options from different banks. Furthermore, talk to them about opening an account so that it would be easier to receive checks from employers.

If a youth is looking for a car, show them Craigslist and other inexpensive car websites. Talk to them about interest rates, the importance of insurance, and the expense of car maintenance.

Youth who age out are eligible for BadgerCare+ up to age 26. Work alongside youth to fill out the application. Have them consider things like making appointments, refilling prescriptions, calling healthcare providers with questions or problems, making insurance claims, and carrying an insurance card. Discuss emotional ups and downs with the youth, including depression. Let the youth know where they can go to receive help.

Couponing saves money! If the youth plans on living on their own when turning 18 they should know how to save money on groceries.

## 17-18

The agency must provide youth a copy of their healthcare records 90 days before their 18th birthday.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) planning meeting(s) should begin at 17.5 and be completed no later than 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. This meeting should be initiated by the Child Welfare Agency, and include (at a minimum) the youth, their 2 adult supporters, and a representative of the Transition Resource Agency.

If a youth has been in court-ordered OHC 6 months or more and reaches the age of majority while in court-ordered OHC, the agency **must** ensure the child is in possession of the following: certified copy of their birth certificate, Social Security card, information on maintaining health care coverage, either a driver's license or state-issued identification.

## 18

At the ILTD meeting, youth eligible for extended care (those with an IEP and not expected to graduate from high school by 19) should be presented the option and encouraged to discuss what will be in their long-term best interest.

Reminder: Adult adoptions are possible, and can provide some youth who "age out" a sense of permanency they did not achieve during their time in care.

Help the youth understand how to apply each year for healthcare. Also, notify the youth that it is a good idea for them to keep their records regarding medical history, medications, doctor visits, numbers and locations of their doctors whether that be an eye doctor, dentist, or primary doctor.

## 19-21

If the youth is in a post-secondary school (technical college or a four-year university) talk to them about housing options.

Once the youth reaches age 21, they do not receive financial assistance through IL funds.

If a youth remains in out-of-home care after age 18, the agency must continue to collect the youth's healthcare records and provide them to the youth 90 days prior to the termination of the court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement and document this on the youth's permanency plan.

Youth who completed the NYTD Survey at 17 will be asked to participate again at 19 and 21.

## 22-26

Before youth become ineligible for BadgerCare+, talk to them about different ways of getting insurance (i.e. through employer, Marketplace, Medicaid).

Youth who "aged out" become ineligible for BadgerCare+ at age 26, unless deemed eligible for another reason.

Youth become ineligible for Brighter Star, Wisconsin's ETV Fund at age 23.

*I know I have potential and I am dreaming bigger for myself now than I did when I was in high school. I want even better opportunities for foster youth to dream big in the future. We are resilient, capable, and a worthy investment in the future of Wisconsin. - Katie*

### ABOUT

The Roadmap to Independent Living was developed by Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), in collaboration with Wisconsin's 2018 FosterClub All-Stars. FosterClub All-Stars are young people with lived experience in the child welfare system, selected to do advocacy nationally on behalf of their peers currently or formerly in out-of-home care. Intended to serve as a visual guide of the broader independent living continuum, the roadmap shows how the needs youth identify intersect with DCF's independent living requirements. We encourage those working with youth to use this as a conversation starter regarding their needs, dreams, and plans for the future.

*"I want to see more youth go to school. I want more youth to achieve greatness and I want them to know they are not alone in any battle."*  
- ShawnaRae