

Extended Out-of-Home Care

What is Extended Out-of-Home Care?

Individuals aged 18-21 may remain in out-of-home care if they meet certain criteria, in order to complete their high school education.

Am I Eligible?*

You may be able to remain in care or return to care if you meet all the following criteria:

- You have (or will) age out of care on or after your 18th birthday;
- You are under age 21;
- You have not yet graduated from high school;
- You are attending high school or its vocational or technical equivalent on a full-time basis; and
- You have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Where Will I Live?

If you remain in care or re-enter care, you can live in any of the following placements:

- The home of a relative;
- A kinship care provider;
- A foster home;
- A group home;
- A residential care center;
- At home under a trial reunification; or
- A supervised independent living program.

“Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you, doesn’t mean you can, should, or need to do it alone.” – Lisa Olivera

* If you are not eligible for extended out-of-home care, but you did/will “age out” of out-of-home care in Wisconsin, you will likely be eligible for Independent Living supports and services through a regional Transition Resource Agency. For more information and points of contact visit the [DCF Independent Living page](#).

Extension of Out-of-Home Care Placements

How does Extending Out-of-Home Care Work?

Step 1: When you turn 17.5 years old (or 180 days before your court order expires), your caseworker will determine if you are eligible for extended care.

Step 2: If you are eligible, a caseworker will discuss the options with you. You can:

- Remain in care by extending your current out-of-home care court order; or
- Sign a Voluntary-Transition-to-Independent-Living Agreement; or
- Exit care when your current court order ends.

Step 3: You decide whether you want to stay in care (option a or b) or exit care (option c). The decision is up to you (and/or your adult guardian if you have one).

What if I Decide to Remain in Care?

Your current placement may continue until you are no longer eligible (you graduate from high school, turn 21 years of age, you no longer have an IEP, you are missing from care, or you are not attending school).

What if I Decide to Exit Care?

Your agency will request a Transition-to-Discharge hearing, where the court will review the options with you again. If you say you wish to exit care, they will provide information on how to return to care.

How Do I Re-enter Care if I Left?

If you aged out of care, you may re-enter care at any time before your 21st birthday, as long as you have not graduated from high school, you are a full-time student, and you have an IEP. Here are the steps:

Step 1: If you are not attending school, re-enroll in school. Talk to your guardian or Independent Living Coordinator about your plans. He or she can assist you in re-enrolling in school.

Step 2: Submit a written request to the agency in the county you live or the agency in the county where you aged out of care, with proof that you are enrolled in school and have an IEP.

Step 3: Once you submit your request, the agency will determine your eligibility and respond to you within 5 days.

Step 4: If you are determined to be eligible you will need to sign and be in agreement with the conditions of a Voluntary-Transition-to-Independent-Living Agreement with the agency.

Step 5: If housing is not immediately available, the agency will obtain temporary housing for you and find you a long-term placement within 10 days.

Extension of Out-of-Home Care Placements

What is a Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement?

A Voluntary-Transition-to-Independent-Living agreement is an agreement between you and the agency which allows you to be placed in out-of-home care with limited court involvement.

You will agree to:

- Participate in activities to prepare you for independent living, such as practicing skills needed for transitioning to independence;
- Go to school full-time;
- Inform the provider and/or caseworker if you expect to be gone for a period of time;
- Inform your agency if there is any change in your education that would affect your eligibility to stay in care (for example, graduating from high school or discontinuing your education).

Can the Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement be Terminated?

Yes, if you no longer qualify to stay in care or you do not follow your Voluntary-Transition-to-Independent-Living Agreement, you or your agency may terminate the agreement.

If you are having difficulty, the agency should work with you to resolve issues and create a plan so you can follow your agreement and stay in care.



Can I Appeal a Decision?

If your request for extended care is denied or your Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement is terminated, you have the right to appeal that decision. You may submit a written request for an appeal of a denial of the request to re-enter out-of-home care by the agency or agency termination of the Voluntary Transition-to-Independent Living Agreement.

The request must be sent to the director of the agency or his or her designee within 10 days after the date of the agency's notice of denial or termination. If you do not request an appeal within 10 days after the date of the agency's notice of denial or termination, the denial or termination becomes final.

For More Information

Email: DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov

Website: [DCF Independent Living page](#)

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.