

Reference Sheet - Benefits for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adult Living

This assistance is coordinated through the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program of Child Protective Services.

1) Transitional Living Allowance (up to \$1,000 to be distributed in increments not to exceed \$500 per month)

- Must have been in FPS paid foster or [Medicaid-paid substitute care](#) within the 24 months prior to initiating the allowance;
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien;
- Must have completed at least 5 hours of training in each of 5 of the 6 PAL life skills core elements, [one of which must be Money Management](#) (Any substitution of training hours or variance must be approved by the regional PAL supervisor);
- Must be making or have made a planned move into an independent living arrangement, or a supervised or semi-supervised setting;
- Must be employed, be actively seeking employment (for those youth who are able to work), be enrolled and attending school or college, or be receiving prevocational or vocational training services; and
- Must provide all information required by regional CPS staff.

Note: All payments must be made by the young adult's 21st birthday.

Participation in PAL training or services, while strongly encouraged, is not required for the following three benefits:

2) Aftercare Room and Board Assistance (based on need, up to \$500 per month with a total cap of \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult; variances may be considered in emergency or special circumstances.)

- Must be between 18 and 21 years of age;
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien;
- Must have aged out of foster care at age 18 or older (FPS conservatorship and control must have been maintained until age 18);
- Must be in an educational program, be employed or actively seeking employment (for those who are able to work), or be receiving prevocational or vocational training services; and
- Must prove financial need. *Note: Some time-limited exceptions may be made in special medical or emergency situations.*

3) Transitional Medicaid [a provision of federal (Chafee Foster Care Independence Act) and Texas State Law]

- Must be a current Texas resident between 18 and 21 years of age;
- May be extended to 23 if attending approved school.
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Must have aged out of foster care at age 18 or older (FPS conservatorship and control must have been maintained until at least age 18);
- Must have no other medical coverage (private insurance or other category of Medicaid);
- Must not have resources valued at more than \$10,000; and
- Must meet the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) income guidelines for this category of Medicaid.

Note: A DFPS foster care eligibility specialist will initially certify youth who qualify for the Transitional Medicaid as they age out of care. The youth's caseworker coordinates with the eligibility specialist to ensure the certification process is initiated.

- **Must call the DHS Centralized Benefits Section at 1-800-248-1078, ext. 8126 to report change of address. Information may be faxed to Jordan Young at (512) 908-9515.**

4) Tuition and Fee Waiver (for Higher Education)

(A provision of Texas State Law, Section 54.211 of the Texas Education Code. While U.S. citizenship or qualified alien status is not required, it is strongly encouraged as young adults without such status will have difficulty obtaining any federal financial assistance at college.)

To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees at a Texas state supported institution of higher education, the youth must:

1. Have been in FPS conservatorship in foster or other residential care on or after:
 - The day preceding the 18th birthday;
 - The day the youth graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma; or
 - The day of the youth's 14th birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights being terminated) on or after that day; and
2. Enroll in an institution of higher education as an undergraduate student not later than:
 - The student's 25th birthday.

Note: Youth who meet requirements and are adopted or placed in a kinship placement may be eligible.

5) Texas Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV):

Under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001, DFPS recently received funding for a new state grant program to provide post-secondary educational and training vouchers (ETV Program) to eligible youth who are in care or age out of foster care, or who are adopted from foster care after turning 16 years old. The ETV Program allows FPS to expand and supplement the current assistance provided to former and eligible foster care youth and specifically, helps them to begin, continue and/or complete their educational and vocational goals.

Qualification

Those qualified for the ETV are:

- Youth between 16 and 21, has a high school diploma or equivalent, and is or will be attending a public or non-profit program that provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or
- Youth is beyond the age of compulsory school attendance (age 18) and is attending an accredited or pre-accredited program that provides not less than one year of training toward gainful employment; or
- Online/correspondence/distance courses. Please contact ETV to seek attendance approval.

Eligibility

Those eligible for the ETV are:

- Youth has aged out of DFPS foster care but have not yet turned 21;
- Youth is in DFPS foster care, is at least 16, and is likely to remain in foster care until turning 18;
- Youth was adopted from DFPS foster care after turning 16 years old and has not yet turned 21; or
- Youth is or will be participating in the education/training voucher program on his/her 21st birthday and will remain eligible until 23 as long as he/she is enrolled and making satisfactory progress toward completing his/her postsecondary education or training program.

The ETV Program provides monetary assistance for eligible youth who are enrolled in an "institution of higher education," as that term is defined in the Higher Education Act (20 USCS §1001). An "institution of higher education" is defined as a legally authorized public or nonprofit educational institution that is accredited or granted pre-accreditation status.

The ETV program can help with:

- Residential housing
- Rent (ETV pays up to 3 months at a time)

- Room and board costs/food
- Tuition/fees (for non state-supported institution or, if youth is not eligible for the state tuition and fee waiver for former foster care youth)
- Personal items
- Books/supplies
- Childcare
- Transportation needs
- Computer or other required equipment
- Medical insurance through school
- Student loans and fees from the loans
- Costs for attendance at an institution of higher education that do not exceed the lesser of \$5,000 per year or the total cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.

In addition, the assistance provided under the ETV Program cannot duplicate other benefits from DFPS to assist with the same costs.

Applications will be accepted from all areas of the state.

For an application, contact one of the following:

- The youth's PAL Coordinator:
 - Rebecca Daniel (817-255-2311),
 - Christopher Milton (972-221-3910)
 - Jamila Kennedy (817-255-2333)
 - Athena Watson-Clark (817-792-4956)
 - Karolyn Adams (817-255-2327)
- Access the application online at <http://www.bcfs.net/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=988> and choose the word document format.

For more information, contact:

- 1-877-268-4063

6) The Texas Youth Hotline:

The Texas Youth Hotline is a resource for youths who are under 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of the foster care system. Youth may contact the statewide hotline at 1-800-210-2278 for telephone counseling and information and referrals. The hotline can help young adults locate services available in their communities.

Region 03 specifics

- **Transitional Living Allowance (TLA)** – The allowance is given through a series of monthly checks and may not exceed \$500 per month. The total allowance for TLAs is \$1000.00.
- **Tuition Waiver Letter** - Youth must contact their PAL Coordinator to request this letter one to three months before enrolling in college or vocational school. The following information will be needed for the letter:
 - Date of discharge from care
 - Date of birth
 - Social Security number
 - Current address
- **Driver's Education** – Driver's Education may be paid for if funds are available. If funds are not available, youth may check with his/her CPS caseworker for possible resources that may assist with payment of Driver's Education.
- **Books and Supplies** - Youth should apply to the Texas Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) to have books and supplies paid for. The ETV application can only be submitted after youth is actually enrolled.
- **Housing –Housing options for transitioning youth out of foster care are limited in Region 3.** Some transitional housing options that are available are My Own Place in Ft. Worth, for females only, TRAC's Ashby and Gaston Avenue Apartments, VOA's The Faith Project, and Our Friend's Place for females only. More options can be found on TRAC's website <http://www.traconline.org/>. Additional housing opportunities are available in dorm rooms for youth who attend college and live on campus. **Youth need to talk and work with their caseworkers to make housing plans BEFORE they leave care.** Youth may check with their CPS caseworker regarding how to apply for HUD housing. Caseworker should help youth apply for HUD housing at least 3 months prior to the youth's 18th birthday to avoid a longer delay on the waiting list. **However, please note that HUD's funding has been reduced and they may or may not be taking application due to lack of funds.** If you do complete a HUD application, your caseworker will need to provide you with:
 - Copy of Birth Certificate
 - Copy of Social Security Card
 - TX ID or Driver's License
 - If the youth has children, copy of the children's birth certificate(s)
 - Letter of verification of youth's stay in foster care

Wednesday's Child Benefit Scholarship - A \$1500 scholarship **may** be available each year through Wednesday's Child Benefit Corporation (WCBC) for youths who have completed the PAL Program and plan to continue their education at a four-year, two-year or technical college. Only youth in FPS conservatorship under **Region 03** are eligible. Scholarship applications are available through the PAL office. The application must be completed and returned to the youth's PAL Coordinator in time to reach the WCBC office no later than June 1st of each year preceding the fall enrollment. Scholarships are based on a fall, spring, and summer schedule. The funds are divided into \$500 payments for each term, and sent directly to the Financial Aid office of the school. Some adjustments can be made if youth is attending a technical school that is not on a tri-semester program.