

# CHAPTER 11: AFTERCARE SERVICES

## What are aftercare services?

- Aftercare services are transition to adulthood (aka IL) services that are provided to youth after they leave the formal child welfare system at age 16 or older. (See Chapter 9: Planning for the Future Transition to Adulthood and Discharge Planning)
- County child welfare agencies in Pennsylvania and across the country must provide aftercare to youth who were formerly in foster care at age 16 or older.<sup>1</sup>
- Examples of transition to adulthood services that can be provided in aftercare include:
  - Help getting a high school diploma
  - Help finding and applying for colleges
  - Career exploration and training
  - Finding and keeping a job
  - Training in daily living skills
  - Help finding a place to live
  - Help with budgeting and financial management skills
  - Support through mentors and other community-based services
  - (See Chapter 9: Planning for the Future Transition to Adulthood and Discharge Planning)
- In addition to the typical transition to adulthood services listed above, youth who left the child welfare system at age **18** or older can receive the following supports in aftercare:
  - Stipends
  - Room and board assistance (described in more detail below)

## How can aftercare help me?

- Aftercare services can help you build the skills you need to continue to reach your goals as a young adult. Just like transition to adulthood services helped you meet your goals when you were in care, you can continue to get this support to work on goals like getting and keeping a job, budgeting, finding or keeping housing, or learning other skills, after you leave care.
- Aftercare is also like a safety net that provides assistance that can help you when you have a problem and need help in the form of advice, services, a referral, and sometimes financial assistance. Leaving care can be hard and sometimes problems come up. Aftercare can help you deal with some of those issues.

### **Who is eligible for aftercare?**

- Aftercare services are available to youth ages 16 up to age 23<sup>2</sup> who have left the child welfare system. Youth are eligible if they meet at least one of the following:
  - You are between the age of 18 and 23 and aged out of the child welfare system.
  - You are between the age of 16 and 23 and left the child welfare system at age 16 or older to adoption or permanent legal custodianship (PLC)<sup>3</sup>.

### **What is room and board?**

- Room and board is available to youth who have left the foster care system at age 18 and are under age 23.<sup>4</sup>
- Room and board assistance is a type of aftercare services that helps a young person meet their housing needs.
- Room and board assistance can be provided for emergencies to meet short term needs like when a housing plan falls through.
- Room and board can also be provided for a longer period of time as part of a plan. For example, room and board assistance could be used for security deposits, utilities or furniture that help a young person get or keep housing. It could also be used to help a youth pay a portion of their rent for several months.
- If a youth receives room and board services, they will enter into an agreement with the IL program that describes the assistance the youth will receive and any requirements.<sup>5</sup>
- Each county should have a room and board policy. Ask to see the room and board policy to find out exactly what is available in your county.<sup>6</sup>

### **Who is eligible for room and board assistance?**

- A youth is eligible for room and board if they left the foster care system at age 18 or older and is still under age 23.

### **Who provides aftercare services if I move from the county where I was in foster care?**

- If you are eligible for aftercare in any county in Pennsylvania, you are eligible to receive aftercare in any county that you move to.<sup>7</sup> The county where you now live must provide aftercare.
- To request aftercare services in any county in PA that you move to, refer to the electronic resource to find out the county IL coordinator.<sup>8</sup> Call the IL coordinator for the county you are now living in and ask for aftercare services.

### **Who provides aftercare services if I move to another state after leaving the child welfare system?**

- If you are eligible for aftercare in any county in Pennsylvania, you are eligible to receive aftercare in any state that you move to.<sup>9</sup> The state you are living in must provide aftercare.
- To request aftercare services in any state that you move to, look at the Child Welfare Information Gateway website to find out the contact information for the state IL coordinator.<sup>10</sup> Call the IL coordinator for the state you are now living in and ask for aftercare services.
- You may need to provide proof that you were in foster care and are eligible for aftercare. If you do not have that documentation, call your IL worker, caseworker, or attorney from PA and ask them to help you confirm your eligibility.

### **What's the difference between extended foster care and aftercare services?**

- Extended foster care (See Chapter 10: Extended Foster Care) or foster care between ages 18 and 21, is when you stay in or re-enter the formal foster care system. When you are in extended foster care you receive placement and services from the child welfare agency. You have a caseworker, a lawyer, and go to court.
- You receive aftercare services after you discharge from the foster care system and are no longer in a child welfare placement.
- Aftercare services can provide you support to fill in gaps and deal with problems you are addressing after leaving care, but they do not provide as much support as extended foster care. If you need more support, like placement that comes with the help of a caseworker and lawyer, re-entering care may be the right thing for you.

### **Do I have to participate in aftercare services?**

- No. Aftercare services are voluntary, but they are something you have a right to and can be extremely helpful when you leave the child welfare system and need some support.

### **What is an aftercare plan?**

- The aftercare plan is a document that describes the services or supports you will receive in aftercare. It is like a case plan, but just focuses on your aftercare goals and services.
- You may need to advocate for yourself when you develop your aftercare plan. For example, if there is service you need and the child welfare agency says they do not provide, you should ask for a meeting to discuss how this service can become part of your aftercare plan. You can ask your lawyer or anyone else you consider a support or advocate to be part of the meeting.

## **What is the Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) and can I receive it after I leave the foster care system and am an adult?**

- The ETG<sup>11</sup> provides grants of up to \$5,000 each year to youth who are or have been in foster care who are attending post-secondary education and training.
- You can use this grant at schools in Pennsylvania or anywhere in the country as long as the school is eligible for Title IV- student assistance from the Department of Education.<sup>12</sup>
- These funds can be used to pay for tuition and costs related to attendance of school, like books, housing costs, transportation and childcare.
- To qualify, students must have been in foster care at age 16 or older and be under 26. This includes youth who were in foster care at age 16 or older and left the system to adoption or permanent legal guardianship.<sup>13</sup>

## **What is Medicaid for Former Foster Youth?**

- If you were in foster care at age 18 or older, you are eligible for Medicaid as a former foster youth. You are eligible for this coverage until age 26,<sup>14</sup> regardless of your income (how much money you make).
- If you are aging out and are eligible for Medicaid, ask your case worker if they have taken steps with the Medicaid agency to make sure you are covered as a former foster youth.
- If you left care at age 18 or older, lost your Medicaid coverage, and are still under age 26, you should apply for Medicaid coverage as a former foster youth.
- If you left care before turning 18, were not eligible for Medicaid while in care, or are over age 26, you should still apply for Medicaid. Pennsylvania has expanded access to Medicaid for adults so you may be eligible. This is good health insurance.
- Apply for Medicaid by going to your local county assistance office<sup>15</sup> or apply online on the COMPASS website.<sup>16</sup>

## **Are there any financial benefits or cash assistance that I may be eligible for once I leave the foster care system?**

Cash assistance programs are for people who fit into a particular eligibility category and have a very low income. You can apply for cash assistance at your local county assistance office. Eligibility for cash assistance is determined based on a number of factors including your income (how much money you make), citizenship, residency, and many others. Here are a few examples of cash assistance benefits that you may want to consider as you make the transition to adulthood:

### **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).**

- TANF is a cash assistance benefit that you may be eligible for if you have very little income, and you live with your children.

- If you receive TANF, you must participate in a welfare-to-work program, unless you are excused. You must also pursue child support against your child's other parent who does not live with you, unless you have a good reason not to (such as fear of violence).
- The welfare office can modify its rules for you if you cannot comply with its welfare-to-work, child support cooperation, or other rules because of domestic violence.
- To apply for TANF you can go into your local county assistance office<sup>17</sup> or apply online on the COMPASS website.<sup>18</sup>

### **Food stamps or SNAP**

- Food stamps are funds that you can use to pay for food. They are issued on a card that looks like a credit card (an EBT card). This card can be used for food at most grocery stores and supermarkets.
- You may be eligible for food stamps if you are low income. How much you receive will depend on how much money you make and your living costs.
- To apply for SNAP you can go into your local county assistance office<sup>19</sup> or apply online on the COMPASS website.<sup>20</sup>

### **Low Income Home and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

- LIHEAP provides funds to low income individuals to assist with heating costs.
- LIHEAP can also provide emergency grants in some cases to avoid being without any heat or to prevent a utility shut off.
- You may also be able to use LIHEAP to repair your broken heating system.
- To apply for LIHEAP you can go into your local county assistance office<sup>21</sup> or apply online on the COMPASS website.<sup>22</sup>

### **Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)**

- The WIC program provides funds for food like milk, eggs, and fruit, and nutrition programs.
- You may be eligible if you meet income requirements and are pregnant, have recently given birth, are breastfeeding. Your child may be eligible for WIC if she or he is age 5 or younger.
- For more information on applying for WIC for yourself or your child, you can visit [www.pawic.com](http://www.pawic.com), call 1-800-WIC-WINS or visit your local WIC program office. You can start the process by filling out the WIC Pre-Application online.<sup>23</sup>

### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

- (See Chapter 6: Youth With Disabilities)

## What do I do if I'm having a difficult time getting aftercare services or the aftercare services I think I need?

- Contact your caseworker, IL worker, and lawyer and ask for a meeting to talk about aftercare services.
- (See Chapter 17: Getting Your Voice Heard)

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<sup>1</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 677 (a)(4) & (b)(3)(A)(2018); OFFICE OF CHILD., YOUTH, & FAM., PA. DEPT. OF PUB. WELFARE, OCYF BULL. NO. 3130-14-01, YOUTH INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES GUIDELINES, P. 35 (2014),

<https://www.payab.pitt.edu/files/2014IndependentLivingServicesGuidelinesBulletin.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> As of July 1, 2020, young people are eligible for aftercare services until age 23. Before July 2020, aftercare services are available until age 21.

<sup>3</sup> OFFICE OF CHILD., YOUTH, & FAM., PA. DEPT. OF PUB. WELFARE, OCYF BULL. NO. 3130-14-01, YOUTH INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES GUIDELINES, P. 4, 35 (2014); 42 U.S.C.A. § 677 (a)(6) & (a)(4)(2018).

<sup>4</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 677(b)(3)(C)(2018).

<sup>5</sup> OFFICE OF CHILD., YOUTH, & FAM., PA. DEPT. OF PUB. WELFARE, OCYF BULL. NO. 3130-14-01, YOUTH INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES GUIDELINES, P. 31 (2014).

<sup>6</sup> OFFICE OF CHILD., YOUTH, & FAM., PA. DEPT. OF PUB. WELFARE, OCYF BULL. NO. 3130-14-01, YOUTH INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES GUIDELINES, P. 30-31 (2014).

<sup>7</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 677(b)(3)(A)(2018); *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, CHILDREN'S BUREAU, Question 3, Sec. 3.1F, [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public\\_html/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/laws/cwpm/policy\\_dsp\\_pf.jsp?id=3](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public_html/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp_pf.jsp?id=3).

<sup>8</sup> Independent Living Contact List by County, PA. YOUTH ADVISORY BD., [http://www.payab.pitt.edu/IL\\_Contacts.htm](http://www.payab.pitt.edu/IL_Contacts.htm).

<sup>9</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 677(b)(3)(A)(2018); *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, CHILDREN'S BUREAU, Question 3, Sec. 3.1F, [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public\\_html/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/laws/cwpm/policy\\_dsp\\_pf.jsp?id=3](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/public_html/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp_pf.jsp?id=3).

<sup>10</sup> *State Independent Living and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Coordinators*, CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY,

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS\\_ID=145](https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=145).

<sup>11</sup> The federal Chafee program is called Education and Training Vouchers (ETV). In Pennsylvania, the program is called Education and Training Grant to make clear that this is a grant program.

<sup>12</sup> *The Federal School Code List*, FED. STUDENT AID OFFICE OF THE DEP'T OF EDUC., <https://ifap.ed.gov/ilibrary/document-types/federal-school-code-list>. (list of schools that receive Title IV aid from the Department of Education).

<sup>13</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 677(i)(2018).

<sup>14</sup> 42 U.S.C.A. § 1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX)(2018).

<sup>15</sup> *County Assistance Office Contact Information*, PA. DEPT. OF HUM. SERV., <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact.aspx>.

<sup>16</sup> COMPASS, <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>.

<sup>17</sup> *County Assistance Office Contact Information*, PA. DEPT. OF HUM. SERV., <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact.aspx>.

<sup>18</sup> COMPASS, <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>.

<sup>19</sup> *County Assistance Office Contact Information*, PA. DEPT. OF HUM. SERV., <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact.aspx>.

<sup>20</sup> COMPASS, <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>.

<sup>21</sup> *County Assistance Office Contact Information*, PA. DEPT. OF HUM. SERV., <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact.aspx>.

<sup>22</sup> COMPASS, <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>.

<sup>23</sup> *WIC Pre-Application*, PA. WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN PROGRAM, <https://www.pawic.com/OnlineApplication.aspx>.