

If you've been committed to the care of DCF, there are programs that can help you learn to live on your own. These are called Independent Living Programs.

DCF Independent Living Programs include:

- Life Skills Program
- Supportive Work, Education and Transition (SWET) Program
- Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)
- Aftercare

How do I get into an Independent Living Program?

Your DCF worker has to agree that you are ready and then recommend you to the specific program. The Independent Living Program has four parts. You might be ready for different parts of the program depending on how old you are.



What is the Life Skills Program?

It's a class to teach you skills you will need to live on your own. It is offered to DCF youth ages 15 - 21 who are living in foster homes, residentials and some group homes. This program teaches you about things like banking, grocery shopping, budgeting and renting an apartment.

What is the Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program?

It is a supervised apartment program, offered to DCF youth ages 16 and older. In this program you will live in an apartment, usually with a roommate. The apartment is supervised by program staff who have keys to your apartment and will come in to check on things. You can have visitors at your apartment, but they have to be on an approved list. The program also has staff to help you learn to manage your apartment and school or work.

Is it like living in a group home?

The SWET program gives you more independence than a group home. To see a list of these programs, go to www.kidscounsel.org. Click on "Placement Resources," and scroll down to Supportive Work, Education, Transition Programs. If you need help with this, please call us.

What is CHAP?

It is a program for youth who have graduated from high school or have a GED, are ready to live on their own, and have completed (or are now in) the Life Skills Program. In the CHAP program, you can live in an apartment of your own, or you can live with other people. The program gives you some money for rent and to help you pay your bills. The amount of money you get will depend on how much money you make and where you live. You will be assigned a case manager who will visit you regularly to see how you are managing your money, and to check out your apartment.

You will get a one-time payment for furniture, household items (pots, pans, towels, a vacuum cleaner), moving expenses and storage. You may also get money for college expenses or a work training program.



How long can I stay in these programs?

Once you are over 18, you can voluntarily stay with DCF until you're 21, as long as you are in high school, college, or some other educational or work training program and you follow the rules of the program. In some cases, you can stay in the program until you are 23.

What is Aftercare?

This is help you can get from DCF for 6 months after you leave DCF, as long as you are under 24. The Aftercare program can help with getting records, counseling, or refer you for housing.

What if I don't want to be committed to DCF anymore?

If you are under 18 you cannot sign yourself out of DCF. In order to get out of DCF care, you have to ask your lawyer to go to court and file a motion for you, and the judge must give an order to revoke, or cancel, your commitment; or, you can apply to be emancipated. Six months before you leave DCF care, there has to be a conference to finalize a discharge plan for you.

If you are over 18 you can sign yourself out of DCF, but you should NEVER do this without talking to your lawyer or a trusted adult first. If you sign out of DCF, you can lose the opportunity to have DCF help pay for an apartment, your living expenses, and college or work training.

Before you are signed out of DCF care, DCF has to have a discharge meeting with you. You may still be eligible for medical help until you are 21. Please ask us if you have questions.

What if I signed out of DCF and now I want to get back in?

If you are under 21, you can apply to re-enter DCF by calling the DCF Hotline (1-800-842-2288) any time of the day or night. You will have to fill out a form and send it back to DCF. Then they will meet with you to talk more about it.

Can I be in DCF care if I am married or in the military?

No. If you are married or on active duty in the military, DCF will ask a court to emancipate you.

If I have a baby, does my baby have to be committed to DCF to live with me?

No. Your baby does not have to be committed to DCF in order to live with you in an Independent Living Program or any other DCF placement. If the Department of Social Services does not help you pay for child care while you are in independent living, DCF will help you pay for child care while you work or go to school.

Can I get help paying for college?

DCF might help you pay for college if you are committed to DCF at the time you turn 18. You will have to sign a paper saying that you want to stay with DCF. You will also have to apply for scholarships, contribute \$500 per year, and be in school full time.

There is a limit on the amount of money DCF will pay for college. For 2011, that amount is the cost for in-state tuition for Central Connecticut State University. Ask your DCF worker about this.

Can I get my driver's license?

You can get your driver's license if you and your worker decide you are ready to learn to drive. DCF will pay 50% of the cost of the driver's education program for the first course.

Do I have a right to money from DCF for high school activities like the prom, class ring and graduation?

DCF must give you money for these expenses in your junior/senior year. The limit is \$500. This is to pay for:

- yearbook
- yearbook pictures
- prom expenses (tuxedo or dress, tickets, pictures, flowers, transportation)
- junior/senior class dues
- class ring
- class trip(s)
- graduation cap and gown

Other school-sponsored activities may also be covered on a case-by-case basis. Ask your DCF worker about this.

What does
DCF have
to offer me?

DCF has all of its policies and programs on their website.

To check out the ones for teens, go to www.ct.gov/dcf and type "adolescent and transitional services" in the search box.

For more information about your legal rights go to the Center for Children's Advocacy website at www.kidscounsel.org and click on "teen legal rights."

Where can I get help?

If you have questions about your legal rights in DCF care, call CCA's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic at (860)570-5327 or (203)223-8975.

For information on other teen legal rights topics, go to www.kidscounsel.org and click on "Teen Legal Rights."



The information in this brochure is intended as reference only and should not be interpreted as legal advice in an individual case. If you need specific information about the law, please call us at 860-570-5327 or 203-223-8975.

Center for Children's Advocacy
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What are
my rights
as a Teen
in DCF
care?