

Can I stay in DCF when I turn 18?

When you turn 18, you can decide if you want to stay with your foster parent, or you may be eligible to get your own apartment. If you are not sure, talk to your social worker and your lawyer.

You can choose to stay with DCF if you are still in high school, college, or another job-training program.

You can stay in DCF until you are 21. Sometimes, you can stay until you are 23.



If I stay in DCF, where can I live?

If you stay in DCF, there are 3 different living arrangements:

1. Foster Home

If you are in a foster home, you may be able to stay after you turn 18. Your social worker and foster parent can help you figure out how to stay but have more independence.

2. Supervised Apartment (PASS, Maternity Home, SWETP)

In a supervised apartment, you get more independence than a group home. You and a roommate live in an apartment and staff have keys so they can come in and check on things. You can have visitors, but they have to be on a list that DCF approves. This program will help you learn how to manage your apartment and school or work.

3. Independent Apartment (CHAP)

You can be in the independent apartment program if you graduated from high school or have a GED, are ready to live on your own, and finished or are taking the Life Skills class.

You can live by yourself or you can have roommates. The program gives you some money for rent and to help pay bills. How much money you get depends on how much you make and where you live. A case manager will visit to see how you manage your money and to check your apartment.

You will get money for furniture, household supplies and food. You may also get money for college or job training.

What else will DCF help me with after age 18?

DCF will pay for housing and will give you some money for daily living. They can also help with services like counseling.

DCF can pay for you to attend college or another education program. They can also pay for you to attend job training or a vocational program (like Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources - CHEER) that will help you get a job. You must spend 40 hours per week in your program to qualify.

DCF says I should go with DMHAS. What does that mean?

DMHAS is the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. They help adults who have a mental health diagnosis and history of treatment.

DMHAS is different from DCF. If you go with DMHAS, you might live in a group home or in an apartment. They may help you pay for the apartment for a short time but you will have to apply for benefits to pay the rent by yourself.

You have to comply with mental health services, like therapy, to continue to get help from DMHAS. They can also help you apply for Social Security, cash assistance and food stamps. If you go with DMHAS, you may still get money from DCF for school. If DCF tells you to go with DMHAS, talk to your lawyer to figure out if this is the best thing to do.

Can I leave DCF?

You can leave DCF when you turn 18 unless there is a court order that says you have to stay in DCF.

If you are on probation, the judge can tell you to stay with DCF.

If you want to leave DCF when you turn 18, talk to your lawyer and your social worker. Ask for a Transition Planning Meeting to talk about how you will take care of yourself. The meeting should be at least 90 days before you leave DCF.

What is a DCF Transition Plan?

Before you leave DCF, you need a Transition Plan that works for you. The law says you must have this plan at least 90 days before you leave DCF.

Your plan should include:

- where you will live
- what money you will have
- how you will get food, clothes, transportation
- how you will finish school or get a job
- benefits you might get
- services that can help you

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

If you are under 21, you can apply to get back in DCF care. Call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288. A re-entry liaison will meet with you to see if you are able to get back in DCF care.

What if DCF gives me an 800, but I want to stay with DCF?

You can appeal DCF's decision to give you an 800. You only have 60 days to ask for a hearing on your 800. Call your lawyer if you still have one.

If you appeal your 800 within 10 days, DCF will have to keep paying for your placement until you have the hearing.



Important things to know before you leave DCF

Place to Live

Before you leave DCF, make sure you will have money to pay your rent or you have signed up for a waiting list (like Section 8) for programs that help pay for housing.

Benefits

Before you leave DCF, ask your social worker to help you figure out what benefits you can get. You might get Social Security, housing support, cash assistance, and day care assistance. DCF should help you apply for benefits. You can get more information from DSS at ct.gov/dss.

Food

Food stamps are called SNAP. Ask your social worker to help you apply. You can get more information from SNAP at ct.gov/dss.

If you cannot get food stamps, call End Hunger Connecticut at 860-560-2100.

You can also go to foodshare.org and type “mobile sites” into the search box to find a place near you.

School

You can stay in high school until you turn 21.

If you move, you can go to school in your new town or you can go to the school you were in before you moved.

You can get Special Ed until you turn 21.

You can also get services that help you learn to live on your own and get a job or go to college.

Ask your social worker to help you to stay in school if you leave DCF. If you have an educational surrogate, ask her to check your school plan.

Medical

You can get health insurance up to age 26.

Make sure you have your medical card and you know where to go to see the doctor. If you have a problem with health insurance, call DSS at 800-842-1508. Make sure you keep DSS informed of your address if you leave DCF care.

Make sure you have these things before you leave DCF

- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate
- Photo ID
- Medical Card
- Credit Check
- Living Will
- Job References
- Contact information for your family



Need Help?

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Information about a hearing: 860-550-6396

DCF Ombudsman

1-866-637-4737

Department of Social Services (DSS)

Information about housing or benefits: 800-842-1508

Center for Children's Advocacy

Information about your legal rights: speakupteens.org

Call us at 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719

This brochure is intended as reference only and should not be interpreted as legal advice. If you need specific information about the law, please call 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719.



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I am in DCF

What happens when I turn 18?