

If you are in DCF care, there is a lot to know so you can make good decisions and get what you want.

If you are committed to DCF, there are programs that can help you learn to live on your own.

The more you know about these programs, the better you can advocate for yourself. If you are 14 or older, ask DCF for an Adolescent Specialist social worker who is trained to provide services for youth of this age.

How do I get into one of these programs?

Your DCF worker has to agree that you are ready and has to recommend you to a specific program. You might be ready for different things depending on your age.



DCF programs have many different names. Here is what you need to know:

Life Skills Education and Training

DCF will provide you with the information and skills you need to live on your own. This is offered to youth between 14 and 21 who live in foster homes, residentials and some group homes.

Life Skills will teach you about things like banking, grocery shopping, budgeting, renting an apartment, career planning, and self care. You can get a stipend for participating in Life Skills.

Transitional Living Programs - SWETP

The Supportive Work Education and Training Program (SWETP) is offered to DCF youth 14 and older who need support to practice independent living skills, and are not yet ready for independent living.

Transitional Living might be a supervised apartment or it might be structured community group living to help you prepare for being an adult.

Independent Apartment Program (CHAP) (Community Housing Assistance Program)

CHAP is for DCF-committed youth who:

- stay in DCF after they turn 18
- graduated from high school or have a GED
- are ready to live on their own
- completed a Life Skills program
- are in an educational or vocational program that is approved by DCF

In CHAP, you can live in your own apartment, with other people, or in on-campus dormitories.

You will need to spend at least 40 hours each week in classes, studying, working part-time, volunteering, in therapy, and/or doing extracurricular activities.

CHAP gives you some money for rent and to help pay your bills. The amount of money you get will depend on how much money you make and where you live.

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

You will have a case manager who visits regularly to check your apartment and see how you manage your money.

How long can I stay in these programs?

Once you turn 18, you can choose to stay with DCF as long as you are in high school, college, or some other educational or work-training program.

You can stay in these programs until you are 21, as long as you follow the rules of the program.

In some cases, you can get support until you are 23.



Leaving DCF Care

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

If you are under 18, you cannot sign yourself out of care. There are two ways to leave DCF care if you are under 18:

- Ask your lawyer to go to court and file a motion for you to revoke or cancel your commitment. The judge must agree to do this
- Apply to be emancipated (you must meet certain requirements)

Three months before you leave DCF care, there must be a meeting between you, your social worker, your lawyer, and your providers to talk about your discharge plan.

If you are over 18, you can sign yourself out of DCF care, 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 chance to have DCF help pay for your housing, living expenses, and college or work training.

Before you sign out of DCF care, DCF has to have a discharge meeting with you. You are eligible to get medical help until you are 26.

Ask us if you have questions.

If I signed out of DCF can I get back in?

If you are under 21, you can apply to get back into DCF. Call the DCF Careline (800-842-2288) any time of the day or night. You will have to fill out a form and send it to DCF. They will meet with you to talk about getting back into care. If you need help with this, call the Center for Children's Advocacy at 860-570-5327.

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

No. If you are married or on active military duty, 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 to live with you in any DCF placement.

Can I get help to pay for childcare?

If DSS (Department of Social Services) does not help you pay for childcare while you are in an independent living program, DCF will help you pay for childcare while you work or go to school. Care4Kids can also help.

Can I get help to pay for college?

DCF may help you pay for college if you are committed to DCF when 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. Ask your DCF worker about this. In most cases, you must maintain a 2.0 GPA and take 12 credits of classes. DCF can also pay for vocational training.



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. If you are under 18, DCF will pay for you to complete a driver's education program.

Will DCF pay for high school activities like prom, class ring and graduation?

DCF will give you up to \$500 for your senior year expenses, including:

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

Other school-sponsored activities may also be covered. Ask your DCF worker about this.

If DCF turns you down, you have a right to an administrative hearing. Ask your lawyer for help.

Need Help?

Center for Children's Advocacy

860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719
speakupteens.org and cca-ct.org

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

DCF policies and programs are listed on their website. To see the ones for teens, go to ct.gov/dcf and click on the box for teens. This will bring you to the Adolescent and Juvenile Services page.

Care4Kids

For help to pay for child care
888-214-5437

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 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719.



cca-ct.org and speakupteens.org

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