

Module 1: Why is Building Life Skills Important?

1. Intro

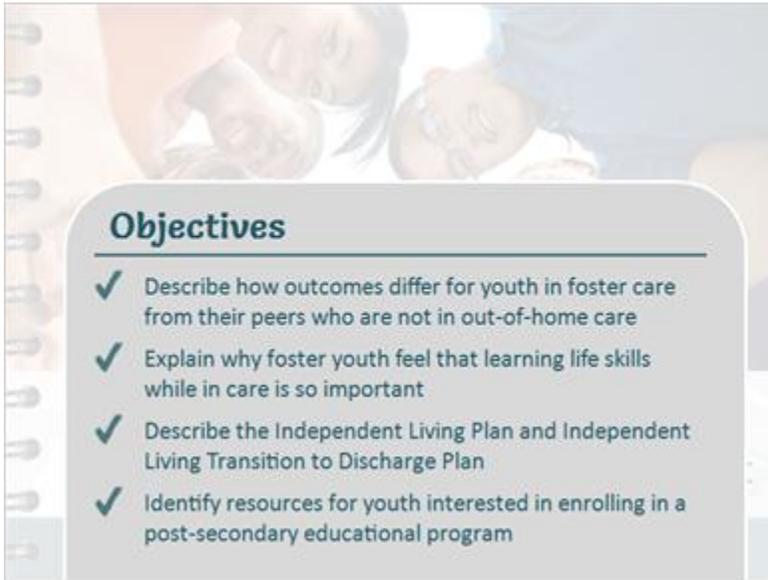
1.1 Key Ideas



Notes:

In this module, you will learn about why it is so important for you as a foster parent to help the children in your home build life skills, which you'll also hear us refer to as independent living skills. You've probably also heard social workers or caseworkers talk about life skills, and how important they are for children in out-of-home care. As a foster parent, you have a responsibility to help the children and youth in your home build these skills. You may remember hearing about this in the Pre-Placement or Foundation Training.

1.2 Objectives



Objectives

- ✓ Describe how outcomes differ for youth in foster care from their peers who are not in out-of-home care
- ✓ Explain why foster youth feel that learning life skills while in care is so important
- ✓ Describe the Independent Living Plan and Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan
- ✓ Identify resources for youth interested in enrolling in a post-secondary educational program

Notes:

Upon completion of this module, you should have the knowledge and skills to:

- Describe how outcomes differ for youth in foster care from their peers who are not in out-of-home care
- Explain why foster youth feel that learning life skills while in care is so important
- Describe the Independent Living Plan and Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan, and how one builds upon the other
- Identify resources for youth interested in enrolling in a post-secondary educational program

Let's start by learning about some independent living statistics and outcomes, and how you can make a difference for the children and youth in your care.

1.3 Independent Living Statistics and Outcomes

The image shows a document titled "John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act" with the subtitle "In the Senate of the United States, November 19, 1999." The document text includes a resolution and an amendment section. The amendment section lists several items, including "SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE: TABLE OF CONTENTS." and "TITLE I—IMPROVED INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS." A blue callout box on the right contains the following text:

Key points:

- States must assist youth in transitioning from out-of-home care to self-sufficiency.
- Outlines requirements and provides funding to meet needs of youth aged 15-21.
- Youth aged 15 must have an Independent Living Assessment and Transition to Discharge Plan.

This led to the [National Youth in Transition Database \(NYTD\)](#)

Notes:

We have told you that life skills are important, and that as a foster parent, you have a role in building those skills, but you might be wondering how you can make a difference in building life skills. Let's first take a brief look at some history and then at some data that has been gathered for youth in foster care. We'll then talk about how you can help improve these outcomes for the children and youth in your home.

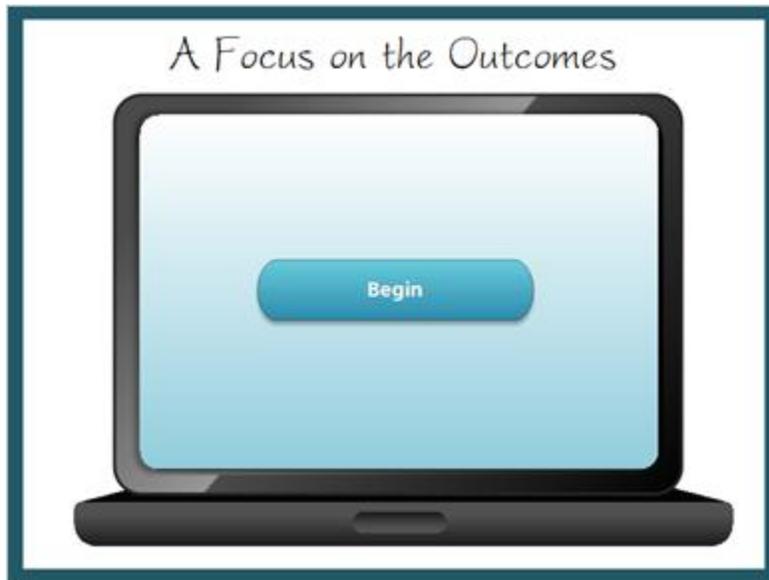
In 1999, Congress established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, requiring states to assist youth in transitioning from out-of-home care to self-sufficiency. The Chafee Act outlines requirements and provides funding to meet the needs of youth aged 15-21 who are in or who have aged out of foster care, and increased funding for transitioning youth up to age 21 who are leaving foster care.

Wisconsin law states that youth aged 15 and older must have an Independent Living Assessment and Transition to Discharge Plan, which identifies the knowledge and skills the youth will need to make a successful transition to living on their own.

The Chafee Act also led to the development of the National Youth in Transition Database, or NYTD, which collects data on services and training that youth are receiving as well as their outcomes.

We'll start by understanding some current statistics and how you can impact positive outcomes of the youth in your care as they become adults.

1.4 Focus on Outcomes



Notes:

Let's look at some of the outcomes that the research has found in comparing foster youth with their same-age peers.

Click the "Begin" button when you're ready.

1.5 School Outcomes



Notes:

By age 19, former foster youth:

54% had at least 3 school changes

25% missed at least one month of school

67% had been suspended from school

16% had been expelled from school

National data shows that at age 21:

Young adults who have not attained a High School Diploma or GED: Former foster youth: 24.4%

Youth not in Foster Care: 7.3%

Young adults who are unemployed: Former foster youth: 52% Youth not in Foster Care: 24.5%

Average income: Former foster youth: \$12,064 Youth not in Foster Care: \$20,349

Have health insurance: Former foster youth: 57% Youth not in Foster Care: 78%

Males have been arrested: Former foster youth: 81% Youth not in foster care: 17.4%

Females have been pregnant: Former foster youth: 77% Youth not in foster care: 40%

College attendance:

Fewer than 12% of former foster youth were enrolled in 2 or 4-year colleges at age 19, compared to 90% of their same age peers

Many former foster youth are still enrolled and pursuing a degree program at age 25

Foster youth have the same aspirations and academic aptitude as their peers

Wisconsin NYTD Data at Age 19:

43% of youth surveyed were employed full or part time

- 45 youth were full time (17%)

- 81 youth were part time (32%)

62% high school graduation rate

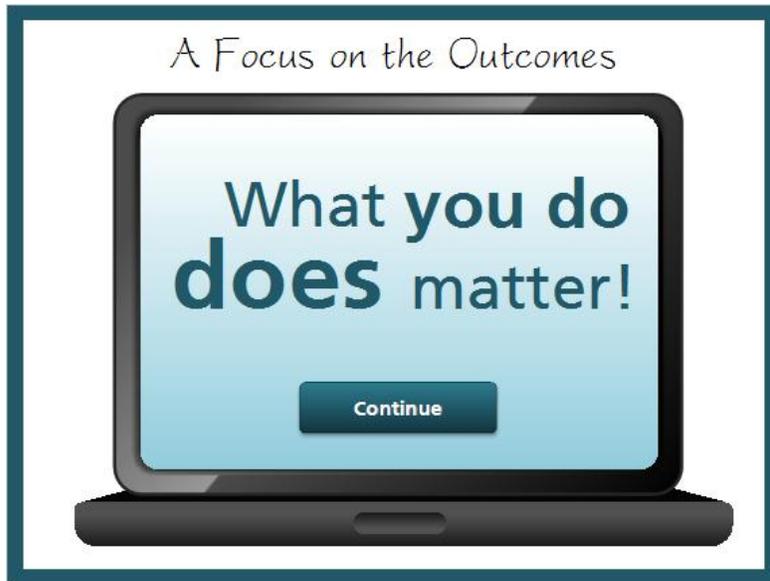
45% were enrolled in an education program

30% are neither in school nor working

29% of youth who took the survey at age 17 and again at 19 were homeless at some point in those two

15% were both incarcerated and homeless in previous two years

13% of youth reported giving birth or fathering a child who was born in the previous two years



1.6 Independent Living Statistics and Outcomes



Notes:

While these statistics may seem overwhelming, you can make a difference to improve them!

Listen as current and former foster youth describe why it is important for youth to become prepared to live on their own, and how you can help the youth in your home to feel more prepared.

Voices of former foster youth: Why is it important for youth to be prepared to live on their own?

>> A huge reason that it's important for youth to be prepared to live on their own comes from the statistics. We know that a large population of the homeless and the incarcerated are former foster youth. It's important for people to understand that you're investing in futures, especially foster children. We've got some great kids that are in foster care with some extremely intelligent ideas of changing the world. And they're just as important to invest in as any other person.

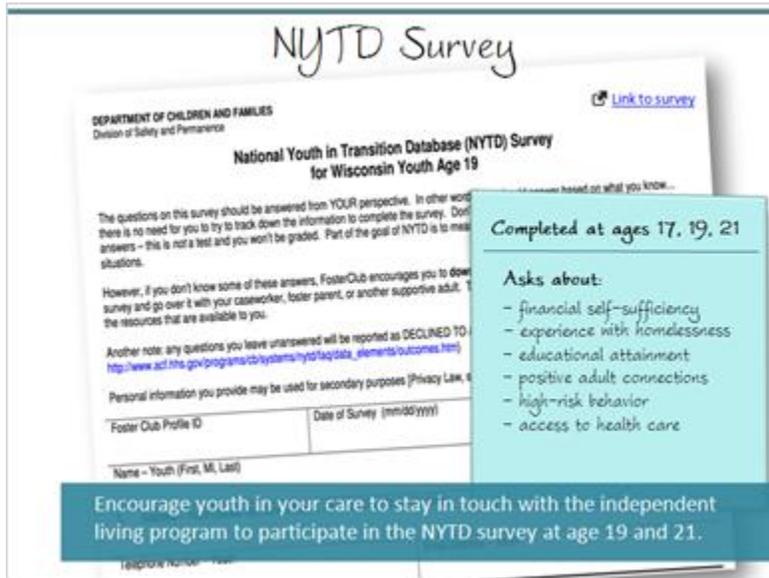
So to prepare those youth for the future and to be on their own is extremely important for society's sake.

>> If they're not, they can be evicted, become homeless, bankrupt, get into drugs. That's a really big problem with aged out foster kids.

>> It is important because they can't depend on someone forever. I mean if you don't help the youth or the foster child, you know, transition into being independent and living on their own, then it's almost like you're setting them up to fail.

>> It's important for youth to be prepared to live on their own because you can't always rely on case workers or foster parents to take care of you. Eventually you will be on your own and expected to fend for yourself either by choice or by necessity. And you have to know how you're going to survive because no one can do it for you. If you have people doing things for you, for your whole life and then suddenly you are thrown out into the world with no skills and no idea how to make it on your own, there's no way you'll ever be able to be successful.

1.7 NYTD Survey



Notes:

As you heard earlier, “NYTD” stands for National Youth in Transition Database. It is the means by which the Administration of Children and Families and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families will learn how our older youth are faring as they transition to adulthood and independence. The NYTD survey must first be completed by youth who are placed in out of home care within 45 days after their 17th birthday. Youth who complete the survey will take it again at age 19 and 21 so that the child welfare system as well as educators, health providers, and other systems, may learn about the areas young people exiting care struggle in and what areas they are successful in, in order to better support them in transitioning. Answers to questions are confidential and contribute to the national database and statistics on aging out youth.

The NYTD survey asks questions about financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive adult connections, high-risk behavior and access to health care. This survey data is gathered into a nationwide information-gathering project and is meant to help the federal government, DCF, and local agencies understand how youth in Wisconsin manage once they leave out-of-home care. If you continue to have contact with the youth in your care, encourage them to stay in touch with the independent living program in your area, as this will help them to participate in the NYTD survey when they are 19 and 21.

1.8 Check Understanding: NYTD Survey

What is the goal of the National Youth in Transition Database, or NYTD, Survey?

- A. Gather more data because we like crunching numbers
- B. Help the federal government, DCF, and local agencies understand how youth in Wisconsin manage once they leave out-of-home care
- C. Track down foster youth so we know where they all are once they leave foster care
- D. None of the above

1.9 IL Services Timeline



Notes:

Child welfare agencies are responsible for ensuring that adolescents placed in out-of-home care are participating in activities commensurate with their age and developmental level. Focus is placed in youth aged 15 and older while they are in out-of-home care, or who are adopted after the age of 16, or go to guardianship from out-of-home care after age 15. DCF creates the policies for these programs and oversees the delivery of the services to the youth, which focus on providing the experience and skills necessary for adulthood. Agencies have specific responsibilities to youth at certain ages, which you can see on the flowchart on this slide.

Before you begin, let's define a couple of terms you'll see and hear about on these slides:

The Independent Living Plan, or IL Plan, is the youth's roadmap to gaining skills and independence. You'll be invited to participate in planning and asked to identify activities

to do with and model for youth. This becomes part of the youth's Permanency Plan. The Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan, or ILTD Plan, is completed at age 17 ½, and is different from the IL Plan as it focuses on the specific tasks that need to be completed for a smooth transition and exit from the child welfare system at age 18 or older. Once identified, tasks should be completed no later than 90 days prior to the youth's discharge from care. As a foster parent, you will play a critical role in preparing the young person to leave care and live on their own.

Please click on the age at the top of the screen to see the eligibility criteria and agency responsibility for each age group.

This is a lot of information to remember, so we encourage you to download the handout.

Age 15+ (Slide Layer)

The slide is titled "Independent Living Services Timeline" in a light blue font. Below the title, it says "Click the ages below to learn about each:" followed by four arrow-shaped buttons labeled "Age 15+", "Age 17", "Age 17.5", and "Age 18". The "Age 15+" button is highlighted in orange. Below this is a grey box with the heading "Key terms you need to know:" and two bullet points, each with a checkmark icon. The first bullet point describes the Independent Living Plan (IL Plan) as a roadmap to gaining skills and independence, which becomes part of the youth's Permanency Plan. The second bullet point describes the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (ILTD Plan) as a plan completed at age 17.5, focusing on specific tasks for a smooth transition and exit from the child welfare system at age 18 or older, with tasks to be completed no later than 90 days prior to discharge. A small "15" is visible on the right side of the slide, and a small logo is in the bottom right corner.

Independent Living Services Timeline

Click the ages below to learn about each:

Age 15+ Age 17 Age 17.5 Age 18

Key terms you need to know:

- ✓ **Independent Living Plan (IL Plan)** is the youth's roadmap to gaining skills and independence. You will participate! This document becomes part of youth's Permanency Plan.
- ✓ **Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (ILTD Plan)** is completed at age 17.5; focuses on specific tasks to complete for smooth transition and exit from child welfare system at age 18 or older. Tasks to be completed no later than **90 days** prior to youth's discharge from care.

Age 17 (Slide Layer)

Independent Living Services Timeline

Click the ages below to learn about each:

Age 15+ Age 17 Age 17.5 Age 18

Age 17

- ✓ Complete the NTYD survey within the 45 days following a youth's 17th birthday
- ✓ Continue IL Planning and seeking opportunities for skill development
- ✓ Goals reviewed every 6 months with youth

than 90 days prior to youth's discharge from care.

Age 17.5 (Slide Layer)

Independent Living Services Timeline

Click the ages below to learn about each:

Age 15+ Age 17 Age 17.5 Age 18

Age 17.5

- ✓ Develop ILTD Plan with youth input
- ✓ Goals reviewed every 6 months with youth
- ✓ Implement ILTD Plan 90 days prior to discharge
- ✓ Maintain goal of permanence and forming lifelong adult connections

than 90 days prior to youth's discharge from care.

Age 18 (Slide Layer)

Independent Living Services Timeline

Click the ages below to learn about each:

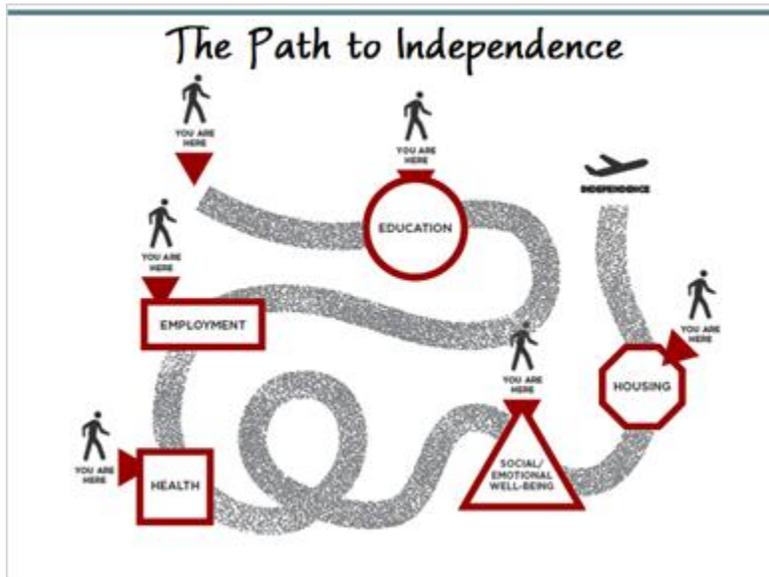
Age 15+ Age 17 Age 17.5 **Age 18**

Age 18

- ✓ Eligibility for post OHC IL services: Youth aged 18 until their 21st birthday. Also, youth who go to Ch. 48 Guardianship or adopted after 16th birthday as limited by Chafee Act.
- ✓ Youth participate voluntarily
- ✓ Youth who is now adult sign release & consent forms
- ✓ Develop IL Plan with youth goals
- ✓ Youth who age out after age 18 are eligible for DCF Scholarship
- ✓ If youth enrolled in postsecondary education at age 21, and participating in DCF Scholarship or ETV, remain eligible up to age 23
- ✓ Additional NYTD surveys are to be completed at ages 19 & 21

more than 30 days prior to youth's case completion

1.10 The Path to Independence



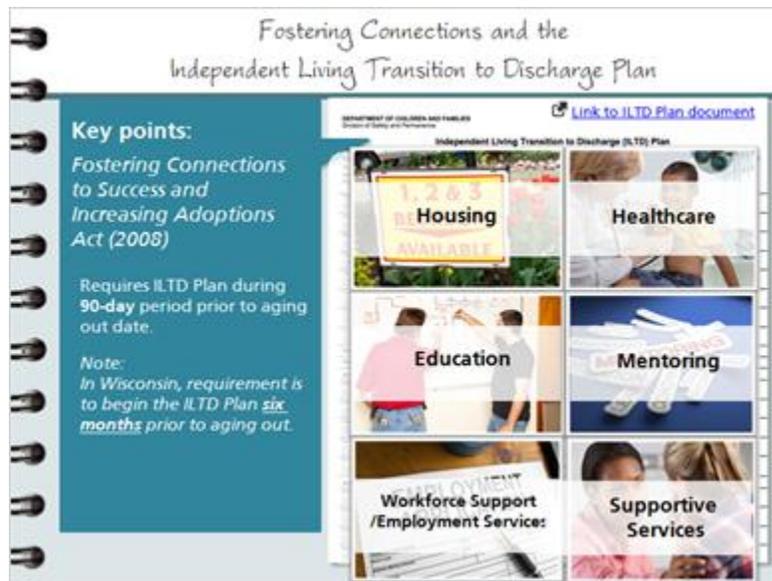
Notes:

We like to think of providing independent living services and life skills development opportunities as helping youth navigate their path to independence. As they walk their path, they will go through many ups and downs along the way, maybe get turned around, and it may be a bumpy road from time to time, but it is our job to help them negotiate this path by providing them with a road map. This map contains the skills they need to become independent adults. As our youth move toward independence, the services that are provided ensure that youth receive training and assistance in:

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Social-Emotional Well-Being, and
- Housing

We'll be discussing these five main areas throughout the rest of this training, and this map will guide our conversation.

1.11 Fostering Connections: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan



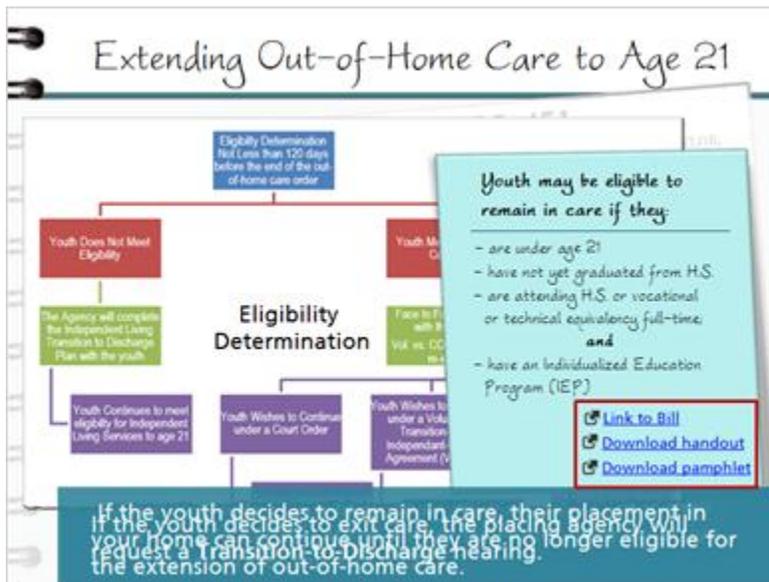
Notes:

In addition to requirements at the state level, there are federal requirements as well. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires that during the 90-day period immediately prior to the date on which a youth is expected to age out of foster care, the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan must be developed for making the transition to independent living.

The Independent Living to Discharge Plan must be personalized at the youth's direction, and has six main areas of focus:

- Housing
- Healthcare
- Education
- Mentoring
- Workforce support and employment services, and
- Supportive services after leaving out-of-home care.

1.12 Extending Out-of-Home Care to Age 21



Notes:

Legislation was passed in Wisconsin in 2014 allowing for the extension of out-of-home care. Youth may be eligible to remain in care if they: 1) Are under age 21; 2) Have not yet graduated from high school; 3) Are attending high school or its vocational or technical equivalency full-time; and 4) Have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition, under this legislation, any youth who leaves care prior to age 21 may decide to reenter care if they have not yet graduated, are in school full-time, have an active IEP and are under the age of 21.

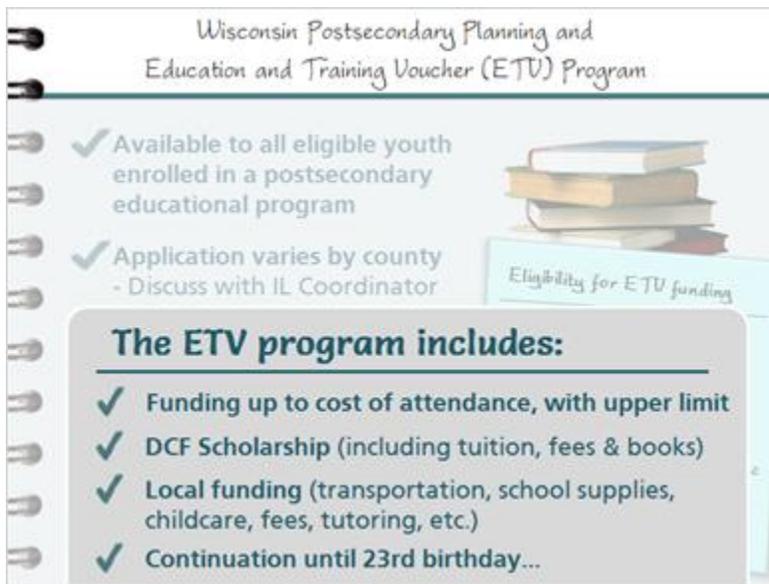
The youth's caseworker will talk to the youth about their eligibility for the extension of out-of-home care at least 120 days before they exit care, and the youth will decide if they wish to remain in or exit care. If the youth decides to remain in care, their placement in your home can continue until they are no longer eligible for the extension of out-of-home care. If the youth decides to exit care, the placing agency will request a Transition-to-Discharge hearing. During this hearing the court will review with the youth the options available through extending care. The youth will again have the option to decide to remain in care or exit care at the time of the hearing.

If you have any questions about extension of out-of-home care, please discuss them with your worker. You may also read the text of [Assembly Bill 570](#) and [Senate Bill 451](#) to get a full description.

1.13 Check Understanding: ILP vs. ILTDP

True or false: the Independent Living Plan and the Independent Living to Discharge Plan are the same thing.

1.14 Wisconsin Independent Living and Education and Training Voucher Program



Notes:

For youth who enroll in a postsecondary educational program, there is funding available called Educational and Training Vouchers, often called “ETV” funding. ETV funding is available to all eligible youth who are enrolled in a postsecondary educational program. The application for local ETV funds varies by county and is handled on a case by case basis through a discussion with the Independent Living Coordinator. Some counties have a form or education plan that also needs to be completed. Any ETV funds used reduce the amount of the DCF scholarship that a youth can receive and vice versa, so youth need to discuss this with their family and Independent Living Coordinator to determine what makes the most financial sense. In order to be eligible for ETV funding, youth need to have aged out of a court-ordered out-of-home placement, have been adopted, or have gone into a court-ordered guardianship anytime after their 16th birthday.

The ETV program includes:

- Funding up to but not to exceed the cost of attendance, with an upper limit of \$5,000
 - DCF Scholarship, including tuition, fees, and books
 - Local funding to cover transportation, school supplies, childcare, fees, tutoring, and
- Continuation until the 23rd birthday providing the youth is enrolled, attending and participating in the ETV program on their 21st birthday

1.15 Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs; Postsecondary Planning and Supports

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
WISCONSIN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS (WEOP)
STUDENT APPLICATION
PROGRAM 1000 (Rev. 03-14)
Formerly 10-3000

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete and return application to the DPI WEOP location nearest you. Locations are listed on the final page of this application. Applicants will **not** be accepted without signatures.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT

The WEOP application form shall be used to apply for the Talent Incentive Program (TIP) Grant, the GE40 LP Scholarship Program, the GE40 LP Program, the Early Identification Program (EIP), the federal TIOG Talent Search and Upward Bound Programs, and the State Talent Search Program.

If you are currently enrolled in grades 8, T.A, 9, 10, or 11, complete Sections I, II, IV, and V only.
 If you are a high school senior or older, complete Sections I, II, and III only.

I. STUDENT INFORMATION

Student's First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____ Last Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____ Gender: Male Female

Date of Birth: MM/DD/YYYY Home Phone Area/No: _____ Cell Phone Area/No: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Mailing Address Street: _____ City: _____ County: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ Student's School ID No: _____

School District of Residence: _____
 S F G H I J K

Name of Middle School Currently or Last Attended: _____ High School: _____ School Address Street, City, County, State, ZIP: _____ Year of Graduation: _____

Is this student: Choose one Hispanic/Latino Not Hispanic/Latino American Indian/Alaska Native Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Asian White Black or African American

II. HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Foster Parent(s) Other: Specify _____

<http://weop.dpi.wi.gov> Find links to the WEOP map & other websites under the Resources tab

Notes:

Sometimes foster youth need extra encouragement and assistance to begin thinking about what they want to do after high school, such as career planning or postsecondary education, or both. One former foster youth told us: "I had a foster parent who took interest in me, pushed me to apply for college even though I didn't think it was for kids like me."

There are programs, called Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs (WEOP), offered through the Department of Public Instruction which seek out and encourage students to attend higher education institutions. These programs help educationally and economically disadvantaged students explore options and continue onto higher education.

Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs provide students with educational counseling to raise their career aspirations, provide follow-up services after students begin college to enhance their adjustment to college, encourage higher education institutions to provide for the unique needs of WEOP students, and provide bilingual counseling.

WEOP can be of assistance to foster youth and foster parents, as these programs provide students and parents support with: academic counseling, financial aid information, increase early awareness of educational opportunities, clarify vocational and education goals, selecting an appropriate college or career training program, completing admission forms and arranging for college entrance exams, applying for pre-college programs, and providing scholarship information, college catalogs, brochures, admissions applications, and financial aid forms.

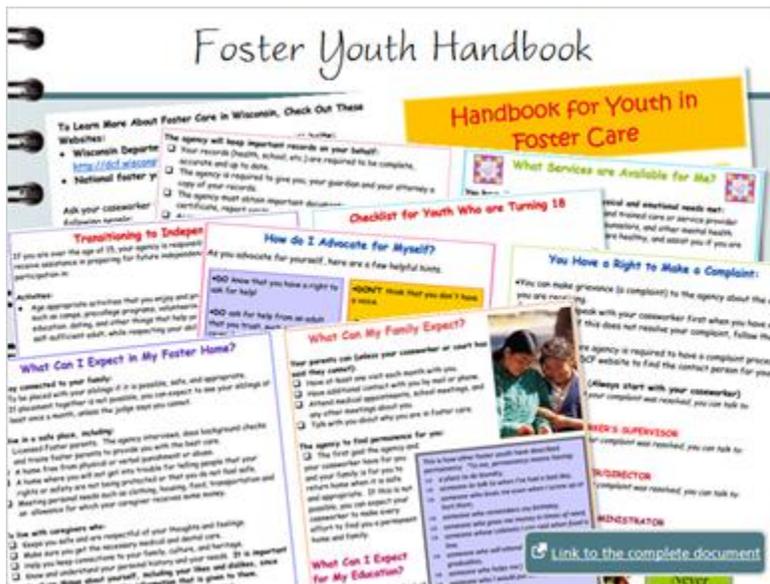
There are various State and Federal programs through WEOP, some that begin as early as sixth grade. In addition, WEOP has statewide offices in Ashland, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Racine, and Wausau.

To begin the process and apply to be part of WEOP, foster youth should complete the

WEOP Student Application Form, which can be found at the address shown. You can help youth complete this form and encourage enrollment in the program. For more information about WEOP go to the [Department of Public Instruction](http://www.wisconsin.gov/education) website.

Photo source: http://www.weop.net/weop_doc/WEOP_Highlights_2012.pdf

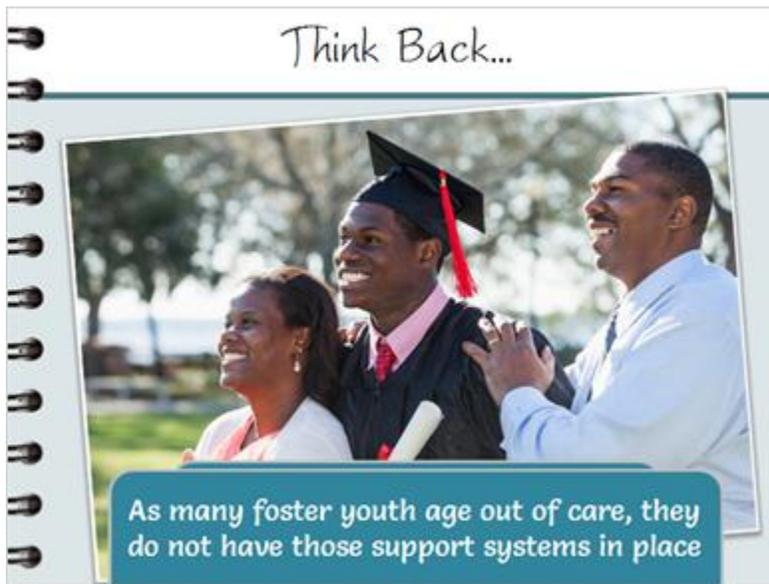
1.16 Foster Youth Handbook



Notes:

The Foster Youth Handbook was designed to help youth better understand foster care and what they can expect while they are in out-of-home care, based on Wisconsin laws and policies. The goal was to create a youth-friendly way of communicating important information. The handbook provides youth with information on confidentiality, participation in court, available services, preparation for independence, tips on self-advocacy, and expectations they can have of the child welfare agency, foster home and education system.

1.17 Think Back...



Notes:

Think back to when you were 18 and graduating from high school...were you planning to get a job? Attend college or other postsecondary education? Did you feel prepared to live on your own as soon as you turned 18? As you think about that, consider the ways that your family may have prepared you to live independently. Now think about the foster children and youth in your home and the skills that they have not necessarily been taught as they have grown up. How would you have felt if you had not been taught those life skills that you had as a young adult? Would you have felt prepared? Would you have felt confident without a support network or a home to go back to for help when you needed it? As many foster youth age out of care, they do not have those support systems in place and often do not have those skills developed. We asked former foster youth if they felt prepared to live independently when they left foster care. Let's hear what they had to say...

1.18 Voices of Foster Youth



Notes:

Voices of former foster youth: Did you feel prepared to live on your own?

>> Well, when I left foster care to live independently, I actually did feel prepared. I had a good group of independent living workers who not only invested their time to make sure that I was going to be successful living on my own but they actually showed me the ropes. I feel that if you show teens or kids who are aging out of care how to do it, not only verbally speaking but physical show them because they don't really know how to possibly open a bank account which I didn't at that age. So I felt really prepared to live on my own independently.

>> No, I didn't know how to do a lot of things such as making doctor's appointments or filling out applications the correct way because my foster parents had done that all for me. And just told me that they did it and assumed that I would know how to do that.

>> Yes and no. I felt that there wasn't the right supports set in place such as housing, looking for housing or knowing places where to get the necessary things I was going to need such as meds or you know, certain grocery stores because I wasn't familiar with the area. Yes because I knew how to cook and clean. I knew how to job hunt. I knew how to build a resume. So yes and no.

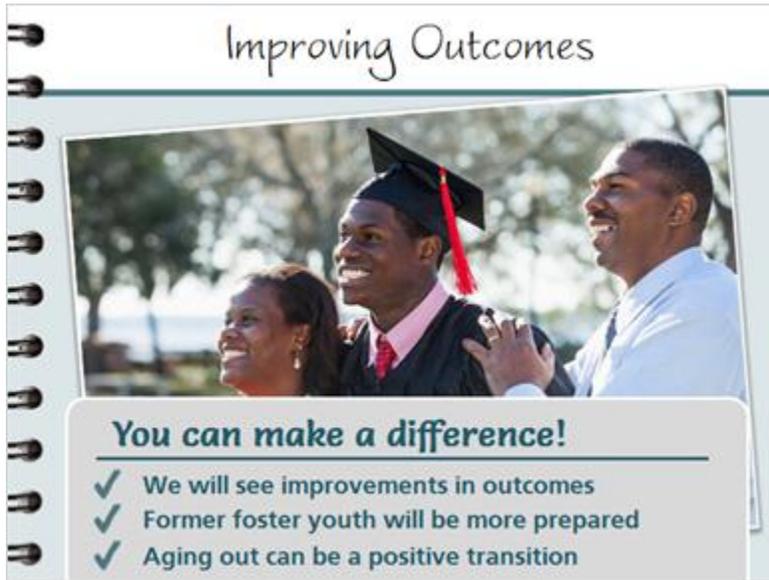
>> No, I didn't feel prepared. For I felt like my foster parents had done most everything for me. And it became overwhelming when I went off to college and lived on my own. When I had to pay my own bills and schedule appointments.

>> I felt prepared in the sense that I had built strong relationships with my foster parents and I knew that I had them to utilize throughout my adulthood when I had issues about car insurance or student loans or different scholarships and things like that.

>> Initially I did. I was ready to be on my own. And I thought I knew everything there was to know but after I almost failed my first semester of college, I realized there was a lot I didn't know. And as I got older I continued to encounter situations that made me realize

just how unprepared I really was for living on my own because I wasn't given the chance to learn the skills I needed.

1.19 Improving Outcomes



Notes:

As we said at the beginning, you can make a difference! If we work to build these skills in our children and youth, we will see improvements in these outcomes and we will see our former foster youth be more prepared for living on their own. If we work together, we can make the aging out process a positive one for our foster youth and give them the life skills they will need to be successful adults.

Watch one family's story in this Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center recruitment video to see how you can truly make a difference!

1.20 Video



View this video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl79tfx4M0s#t=11>

1.21 Reflect

Reflect [Click to email your reflections](#)

Module 1

Think back to what you heard from former foster youth about why they feel it is important for youth to be prepared to live on their own. What are some ways you can help the youth in your home to prepare to live on their own?

click to type your thoughts here

Continue after you have printed or emailed your thoughts

Notes:

Think back to what you heard from former foster youth about why they feel it is important for youth to be prepared to live on their own. What are some ways you can help the youth in your home to prepare to live on their own?

1.22 Conclusion



Notes:

In this module, you have learned about statistics and outcomes regarding independent living both in Wisconsin and across the country; the National Youth in Transition Database; state and federal policies and laws; the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan and the requirements associated with the plan; funding for postsecondary education; and the importance of building life skills for the children and youth in your home. Write down any questions that you might have about this information to share with your licensing worker.