



**NORTH CAROLINA
RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR
YOUTH TRANSITIONING
INTO ADULTHOOD**



This guide was developed by the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program with valuable input from teens living in foster care and a variety of youth-serving agencies.

INTRODUCTION

The information contained in this resource guide covers some of the most important basic needs in your life, particularly as you continue to transition into adulthood. Many people go their entire lives unaware of the free programs and services available in their community, yet at age 18 you are considered an adult and must make your own decisions and provide for yourself. This guide gives a brief description of helpful resources across the state and ideas of programs that might be in your community. It is divided into categories, each on a different color card with a different font for text. No list will ever contain every program or service that is right for you and your situation. So, we've included blank cards at the end of the guide for you to add other resources or information as you see fit. If you ever misplace this resource or move to a different area you can call 211 or a local Department of Social Services to learn about services or programs that fit your needs.

Right now you can probably think of at least one adult in your life such as a foster parent, a social worker, a Guardian ad Litem, a mentor, etc., who can help you contact these agencies. Foster Club USA reminds teens that, "You can try to solve your problems alone, but sometimes when you are a youth, you don't have access to the best resources to solve the problem (for example, a problem in school might involve bringing in a specialist in education)." The truth is that some adults working in these listed programs may be "more ready to help when there is another adult involved."

As you begin to think about getting older and independence, you'll see that many areas of your life are connected and this guide is one way to start thinking about your options before you reach age 18. Many of these programs and services are free to you right now and will help make the transition to independence much easier. It only takes a call to the listed telephone number or in some cases visiting the provided website to get more information and take advantage of these services.

EXAMPLE OF USING THE RESOURCE GUIDE

If you have a question about renting an apartment in your area, turn to the **HOUSING** section and review the resources listed on each card. Remember, renting an apartment can cross over to many other areas of your life. In order to get the apartment, you may need to look under **EMPLOYMENT**, and then once you have an income, you'll need to think about spending and saving money, so check out the resources listed under **MONEY**. You may need training for your new job, and so it would be helpful to check **EDUCATION** for resources on universities or a community college. Of course, you'll need to pay for these classes and **EDUCATION** also describes scholarships, financial aid procedures, and even the Education Training Voucher that can give you access to as much as \$5000 a year. Then, to enroll you may need to show your immunization records and you can learn more about this by looking under **OTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCES**.

Whether you are making these calls and connecting with these services yourself or you are working with an adult, it never hurts to ask. In fact, when you speak with someone from one program and they say it isn't right for you, ask them if they know another program that would be a better fit for you. Just don't give up; you should be able to find the right program for you!

SELF ADVOCACY

This information is provided by FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care, on www.fyi3.com their website for youth preparing to transition to adulthood. The Six Steps to Effective Self-Advocacy can be found at www.fyi3.com/fyi3/Involved/advocacy/selfsteps.cfm

Step 1: Know Your Rights

My Rights in Foster Care

You have certain rights while you are in foster care, and the National Youth Law Center has outlined this list of rights at <http://www.fyi3.com/fyi3/informed/rights/index.cfm>

Know about your state's Independent Living Program

Independent living is assistance to help you live on your own after you "age out" of foster care. It means that you may have available such things as medical coverage, education assistance, housing assistance, a monthly stipend, assistance finding a job, etc.

You have a right to know about the resources available to you and a right to have access to them.

Step 1: Know Your Rights (Continued)

Participate in meetings/conversations that pertain to you.

Most states allow youth to participate in activities like these when they reach a certain age, often either 14 or 16. Speak to your GAL or social worker and find out which meetings would allow you to have the most input.

Step 1: Know Your Rights (Continued)

Keep this in mind; it can be painful to hear all the details that often come up in these meetings. In order for the adults to make good decisions, they need to share details about your history, which might be painful to hear. They may discuss problems that you are having now or have had in the past. Things aren't kept secret in these meetings, although the adults in the room have made a promise to not discuss your case with other people who are not involved in your foster care plan.

One thing you can do to avoid this is to ask your GAL or social worker if it would be O.K. if you could just say what you wanted to say to the group, then leave. This can be arranged for meetings at the agency, in court, or in planning meetings. You may also be able to prepare a written Youth Court Report by speaking with your GAL.

Step 1: Know Your Rights (Continued)

Have your opinions and feelings be heard

You have a right to express your feelings and opinions, and letting them be known is an important way of standing up for yourself. If you find it hard to talk about your feelings, try writing them down and sharing them with a friend, with your foster parents, or your GAL. Talking clearly and directly about how you feel, without blaming others, is a good way to have your ideas count.

Step 2: Define Your Goals

It's not enough to just have a complaint. Think about what the solution will look like when your problem is solved and perhaps what steps you need to take to get there. This is what you should communicate to people who can help you. If you have a clear and consistent message, others are more likely to want to help you.

When defining your goal, it's important to know the difference between "wants" and "needs." When adults see that you understand the difference between wants and needs, they are bound to listen to you more seriously.

Step 3: Understanding the Chain of Command and the Process

Think of the chain of command sort of like stair steps. If you have a problem, you start on the bottom step. If your problem doesn't get solved, you move up to the next step. To find out how the chain of command works in your state, contact the DSS Office (Ask for the DSS Director if talking to your caseworker makes you uncomfortable), and say, "I am a foster child and I have a problem that has not been fixed. I would like to find out the chain of command and who I can talk to next."

Step 3: Understanding the Chain of Command and the Process (Continued)

Remember, the agency has to handle lots and lots of problems every day. But if you truly think your problem is large enough that it deserves their attention and if you have tried to get help but are not getting any assistance, you might try saying, "I would like the name and number of my GAL Attorney Advocate." But remember, to be taken seriously, you should only talk to your attorney when you have tried everything else (like calmly talking to your foster parents and caseworker) to solve your problem. And the problem should be serious: abuse or neglect, discrimination, threats, medical or educational problems, or something else that could affect your safety or well-being.

Step 4: Ask for Support from Others

You can try to solve your problems alone, but sometimes when you are a youth, you don't have access to the best resources to solve the problem (for example, a problem in school might involve bringing in a specialist in education). Plus, some adults are more ready to help when there is another adult involved.

Another thing to consider is the Problem Spreading Theory. This says every problem has a certain "weight." A problem may be very, very heavy or not so heavy at all. When a person has a problem (without involving anyone else), they must carry the entire weight of the problem alone. If they tell others about the problem, the problem's weight is spread out, making the load much less heavy for the person who had the original problem.

Step 5: Document & Keep

If something is happening to you or has happened to you, writing it down while it is fresh in your mind is a way of ensuring that you don't forget any details. Documenting can also be a form of "proof" for others that your problem exists.

Also, writing your complaint or problem on a piece of paper makes your complaint seem more "official." In a perfect world, a complaint you make on the telephone would be considered just as important as one written. But usually a written complaint will get more attention.

Step 5: Document & Keep (Continued)

Another advantage to writing a complaint is that it gives you additional time to think things through and organize your thoughts and arguments. And for some people, especially those who tend to become quiet or withdrawn when "put on the spot," writing is a good way to make sure you get heard.

Besides, if you've ever had somebody tell you something they "heard through the grapevine," you know that information that gets passed along from person to person isn't usually accurate. Writing your complaint lets you be sure that the problem is always told in your own words.

Step 6: Be Persistent

Keep at it. You'll often find answers to problems with persistence.
Congratulations! You now have the information you need to become a great advocate.

ADVOCACY

The agencies listed in this section actively support young people by ensuring their rights are protected and their voices are heard.



North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL)

<http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/GAL/Default.asp>

By North Carolina statute, this agency is appointed by the court to represent a child's best interests once the Department of Social Services has filed a petition alleging abuse or neglect, and in some cases dependency. If this is your situation, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) should be appointed to work in collaboration with an attorney and represent your best interests in court. Unlike some adults in your life, a GAL should focus entirely on you, advocating for special services, investigating community resources, and being your voice in court. If appropriate, your GAL may also be helpful in assisting you prepare a written "Youth Court Report" that may be used to voice your opinions. If you have questions about your GAL or the program's role visit the above website and for the telephone number of your local GAL office visit www.nccourts.org/Citizens/GAL/Documents/GALCountyContactListnew.pdf

North Carolina LINKS

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/links/index.html>

The LINKS program helps to ensure young people have sufficient income to meet daily needs; sufficient academic and/or vocational training that is in keeping with the youth's goals, interests and abilities, and access to routine mental health, health and dental health care. NC LINKS provides these services to all youth in foster care age 16 to 18 and to those young adults who are voluntarily in care between the ages of 18 and 21, as well as to young adults who aged out of foster care at age 18. Some counties provide LINKS services to youth in foster care ages 13 through 15 and to youth or young adults who were discharged from their custody as teens but prior to their 18th birthday. To get more information about LINKS, visit the above website or call your local Department of Social Services.

North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office

<http://www.doa.state.nc.us/yaio/index.htm>

Telephone: (919) 789-5880

This agency, in the North Carolina Department of Administration, offers a blend of programs and services for children, youth, and young adults on a statewide basis. They offer advocacy services on an individual and class basis, state government internships, and youth council opportunities. For more information about this agency you can visit the website or call the listed telephone number.

Legal Aid of North Carolina

<http://www.legalaidnc.org>

Telephone: (919) 856-2564

This agency provides legal assistance in civil matters to eligible, low-income clients who have problems with their basic needs. If you have legal questions please visit the website or call the number above to find an office near you. Common cases or issues handled by this agency include; school discipline, student's rights, school loans, insurance coverage denials, Medicaid, child custody/visitation, name changes, assistance to family violence victims, housing eviction, illegal lockouts or utility cutoffs by landlords, housing discrimination, tenants' rights, public or subsidized housing disputes, home foreclosures, SSI/Social Security disability benefits, food stamps, TANF, and unemployment compensation.

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SAYSO), Inc.

<http://www.saysoinc.org/>

Telephone: 1-800-820-0001

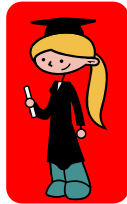
This group's mission is to work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed changes, and providing support and leadership to youth who are or have been in substitute care. Youth between 14 and 24 years old, who are currently in foster care or adoptive care or who have been in any kind of out-of-home care, are eligible to join this group. If you are interested in learning more about getting involved with this organization and sharing your thoughts with other young people with similar experiences please call the number above or visit their website.

Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA)

<http://www.fostercarealumni.org>

Telephone: 1-888-258-6640

If you were previously in care or currently residing in foster care this agency can connect you with young people in similar situations. Through these relationships you can often find appropriate resources for your situation and also advocate for change. FCAA joins the voices of alumni with that of other child welfare experts in order to enhance research, planning, and implementation of approaches in today's foster care system.



EDUCATION

This Section Includes:

**Communities In School of North Carolina
Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
General Education Development Test (GED)
Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
College Foundation of North Carolina (Preparing For College)
North Carolina Educational Support Scholarship Program
Education Training Voucher
Financial Aid and Scholarship
Finding the Right College**



Communities In Schools of North Carolina

<http://www.cisnc.org>

Telephone: 1-800-849-8881

This program connects the following services to students: tutoring and mentoring, youth development skills, peer mediation, conflict management, job shadowing, college planning, college visits, application and financial aid application assistance, scholarships for college and community college, case management, agency referrals, social services, home visits and parent/teacher conferences, business and communities of faith partnerships, community service learning, juvenile court advocacy, specific academic assistance, and school to career transition services. To find a local program, visit the website above or call the listed telephone number.

Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)

This law gives a young person who is at least 18 years old the right to obtain his or her education records and also control who else may access files. Before the age of 18, education records may be accessed with the permission of a parent/guardian or a person acting in that role. However, this law provides exceptions when records may be obtained without parental consent such as when transferring to new schools.

General Education Development Test (GED)

The GED testing program is offered by all 58 community colleges in North Carolina, and the cost to students is \$7.50. The GED test consists of five sections (Language Arts Writing, Social Studies, Science, Language Arts Reading, and Mathematics). For more information about the GED test and even sample questions, visit <http://www.gedtest.org>. You can also take sample GED tests by visiting <http://www.4tests.com/exams> and then clicking the GED link.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

<http://www.collegeboard.com/testing>

Telephone: 1-866-756-7346

The SAT is an admissions test for many four-year colleges and universities, and some technical training programs. There are fees associated with this test, but by using the listed telephone number or website, you can learn more about fee waivers, preparing for the test, see sample tests, and even register for an upcoming test. You may also want to visit www.number2.com for a free online SAT preparation tutorial.

College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC)

<http://www.cfnc.org/>

Telephone: 1-866-866-2362

This agency allows you to create a personalized student planner with your high school accomplishments, compare North Carolina's colleges' requirements, offers help preparing to take the SAT and other college entrance exams, allows you to apply to any college in North Carolina online through their website, learn more about options to pay for college, start a "529" savings account for college expenses, and explore career possibilities.

North Carolina Educational Support Scholarship Program

This program provides free university and community college tuition, fees, room and board, and books for foster youth aging out of the foster care system and also children who are adopted from foster care after age 12. Eligible youth must attend public institutions of higher education (universities and community colleges) in North Carolina. If you have questions about this program you can contact your local Department of Social Services or the Financial Aid Office of the college you would like to attend.

Education Training Voucher (ETV)

<https://www.statevoucher.org/state.xhtml?state=NC>

The Education Training Voucher Program is a service provided through the Department of Social Services' LINKS Program. It offers assistance to youth who are discharged from DSS custody after age 17 and youth who are adopted from foster care after age 16 to enable them to attend colleges, universities, and vocational training institutions. Currently, students may receive up to \$5,000 a year for four years as they pursue higher education. These funds may be used for tuition, books, or qualified living expenses. These funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis to students. You can download more information at the above website and you can complete an online application as well. You can also contact a LINKS coordinator at your local Department of Social Services for more information.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Telephone: 1-800-433-3243

FAFSA is often the first step in the financial aid process for education beyond high school. Use this site to apply for federal student financial aid, such as Pell grants, student loans, and college work-study. Most states and schools require the use of FAFSA to award their financial aid. If attending school in the fall then you should complete the application in the preceding spring semester. Complete all forms and answer to the best of your ability. If you are currently living in foster care or living with a guardian after being in foster care you should respond “yes” when asked the question, “Are you an orphan or ward of the court or were you a ward of the court until age 18?” By answering “yes” you will likely be eligible for more financial aid for school expenses. If you have questions about the form then refer to CFNC, also listed in this section.

Scholarships

Speak with your school’s guidance counselor, your social worker, other adults in your life, and your peers about scholarships. It may also be helpful to contact the financial aid office of any college that interests you and ask about scholarships. You may find scholarships available for young people currently living in foster care, who were adopted from foster care, or who left foster care at age 18 from organizations such as the ones listed below. You can also perform a free scholarship search online at http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp.

National Foster Parent Association
<http://www.nfpainc.org/>
Telephone: 1-800-557-5238

Orphan Foundation of America
<http://www.orphan.org/>
Telephone: (571) 203-0270

Love Our Children USA
Darko Rapotez Memorial College Scholarship
<http://www.loveourchildrenusa.org/scholarship.php>
Telephone: 1-888-347-5437

Finding The Right College

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/csearch/index.html>

This website allows you to use an online search engine for universities, colleges, technical institutions, and community colleges throughout the United States and in other select countries. During the search you are able to select the school's criteria that most interests you. For example, you can search for schools that are in a specific geographic region, have a certain number of students, offer certain majors, etc. You can even find one of North Carolina's 30 universities or 58 community colleges.

EMPLOYMENT



This Section Includes:

Legal Rights in the Workplace
Programs to Help Find Jobs and Internships
Programs that Offer Job Counseling and Develop Job Skills
**Vocational Education Programs with Paid Employment and Free
Classes**
United States Military Service Opportunities

Legal Rights in the Workplace

In NC you must complete a youth work permit, for each job, to be eligible for employment if you are under the age of 18. You may enter the required information for this permit online by visiting http://www.nclabor.com/wh/youth_instructions.htm, and you can also obtain more information about work related questions that you may have by searching the website or calling 1-800-NC-LABOR. If you are under the age of 18, you also have unique rights as a worker and by visiting <http://www.youthrules.dol.gov> you can find more information about the hours you can work, the jobs you can work, and how you can help prevent workplace injuries.

NC Department of Commerce – Division of Workforce Development: Workforce Investment Act

<http://www.nccommerce.com/en/WorkforceServices/>

Telephone: 1-800-562-5333

This agency can connect you with many job related resources such as summer employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work experiences throughout the year, including internships and job shadowing, occupational skill training, leadership development, adult mentoring, tutoring, study skills training, and comprehensive guidance and counseling. To find a local office, visit the website or call the telephone number above.

Apprenticeships

<http://www.nclabor.com/appren/offices.htm>

A registered apprenticeship is available in more than 900 different jobs. A youth at least 18yrs old, with a GED or high school diploma, may be able to establish an apprenticeship that will have skilled supervision for a set length of time. In addition to on-the-job training there will be an in-class training portion. All the requirements and skills will be outlined in an agreement between the employer and the apprentice. Initial wages, as well as future raises, will be listed in the agreement. At the completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice will receive a certificate, and essentially he or she will have attained "journey-worker" status.

Information about the apprenticeship program can often be obtained from guidance counselors at local high schools or community colleges. You can also contact your local Apprenticeship Representative through the N.C. Department of Labor at the website above.

JobLink Career Centers

<http://www.ncjoblink.com>

Telephone: 1-800-562-6333

This center will help you evaluate your job interests and skills, search job listings, prepare a résumé, improve your basic reading, writing, and math skills, refer you to specific job training programs, and connect you to classes to complete your high school diploma or GED. Staff help you find assistance with childcare, transportation, family problems or other things that could affect your success in a job. To find a local office, visit the website or call the telephone number above.

Local Volunteer Centers

<http://www.volunteernc.org/code/volcentrs.htm>

Telephone: 1-800-820-4483

These centers match potential volunteers with local organizations that need assistance in many different roles. As a volunteer, you will likely not receive a monetary payment for your work but volunteer opportunities are often quite meaningful, provide great experiences, help build your résumé, look good for college, and can be a bridge into paid employment opportunities. To find a local volunteer center visit the website or call the telephone number above.

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us/index.htm>

Telephone: (919) 733-7807

N.C. Vocational Rehabilitation provides counseling, training, education, medical assistance, transportation, and other support services to persons with physical, learning, mental, or emotional disabilities in order to help them become independent and job-ready. Visit the website or call the telephone number to find an office near you and see if you qualify for services.

Job Corps

<http://www.jobcorps.org>

Telephone: 1-800-733-5627

Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor with the goal of helping young people ages 16 through 24 get a better job, make more money, and take control of their lives. At Job Corps, students enroll to learn a trade, earn a high school diploma or GED and get help finding a good job. When you join the program, you will be paid a monthly allowance; the longer you stay with the program, the more your allowance will be. Visit the website or call the number to learn about a Job Corps site near you.

Youth Build U.S.A.

<http://www.youthbuild.org>

Telephone: (617) 623-9900

Youth Build provides participants between the ages of 18 and 24 with education and employment skills through meaningful work, in their communities, by helping to meet the housing needs of homeless individuals and members of low-income families. The program provides on-site housing construction work experience and off-site academic classes, job skills training, leadership development, and supportive services. Youth Build also increases the supply of permanent, affordable housing for homeless and low-income families in your community. Visit the website or call the number to learn about a Youth Build site near you.

United States Military Service Opportunities

These agencies represent the five branches of the United States Armed Forces and the two National Guard branches. You can serve any of these agencies on an active or reserve basis, and you can find out more about each group by visiting their website.

Air National Guard of the United States
<http://www.ang.af.mil>

United States Coast Guard
<http://www.uscg.mil>

Army National Guard of the United States
<http://www.arnq.army.mil>

United States Marine Corps
<http://www.usmc.mil>

United States Air Force
<http://www.af.mil>

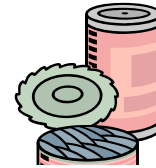
United States Navy
<http://www.navy.mil>

United States Army
<http://www.army.mil>

FOOD



This Section Includes:



Places Serving Free Hot Meals
Places Distributing Canned Goods and Other Nonperishable Foods
Information About Food Stamps

In your community there may be several organizations or programs that serve free hot meals or distribute canned foods to those in need. Often the programs are run by local churches or homeless shelters. You can usually find these places directly by checking the telephone book or contacting your local Department of Social Services who often keeps a list of these programs.

Refer also to the information and programs listed in the HOUSING section of this guide. Many of those listed resources also provide meals and/or a food pantry to those in need.

Food Stamps

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/foodstamp/index.htm#comp>

Food Stamp benefits may be used to purchase most foods at participating stores. Monthly allotments of Food Stamp benefits are issued via Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (EBT cards). As with many programs, you must meet certain income, citizenship, work, and household composition requirements, but all of these things can be explained to you and you can receive an application by contacting a representative of your local DSS. You have the right to receive an application, receive your food stamps (or be notified that you are not eligible for the program) within 30 days, receive food stamps within 7 days if you are eligible for emergency benefits, and have a hearing if you have a disagreement. To find out more, contact your local DSS office.

HEALTH CARE

This Section Includes:

**Health Check/Medicaid Information
Medical and Dental Clinics
Local Public Health Departments**



Health Check (commonly called Medicaid)

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dma>

Medicaid coverage is available to foster care adolescents ages 18, 19, and 20 without regard to the adolescent's assets, resources, or income levels. In order to be eligible, the young person should have been in foster care under the responsibility of the state on his or her 18th birthday. The Division of Medical Assistance, within the Department of Health and Human Services, will administer this service. So, if you have questions about the program or your medical coverage, contact your local Department of Social Services.

More on the topic of Health Check (commonly called Medicaid)

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dma>

Even if you don't age out of the foster care system at age 18, as long as you meet certain basic requirements, you may still be eligible for Health Check/Medicaid through at least 20 years of age. Through this program you may receive medical care at no cost to you. Also, if you are under the age of 19 but do not qualify for Health Check/Medicaid you may be eligible for NC Health Choice, another program that can help reduce medical costs.

You may apply for North Carolina Medicaid and/or North Carolina Health Choice for Children by obtaining and completing a short application from your local DSS. If you have questions about the program or the application a member of the social services' staff should be able to help you.

Your local community may have several centers that provide medical or dental treatment while also providing information about disease prevention and promotion of good health habits and lifestyles. These agencies often accept Medicaid, private insurance, and also offer services to the uninsured based on a patient's ability to pay. In order to locate one of these centers contact your local Department of Public Health, Department of Social Services, or you may be able to locate them using the yellow pages of a telephone book.

Department of Public Health

<http://www.ncalhd.org/county.htm>

Telephone: (919) 707-5000

Each county should have a department of public health that can help you locate medical care at a reduced cost or no cost at all. This agency also works to promote and protect health by identifying and reducing health risks, preventing the spread of diseases through education and immunizations, fostering healthy lifestyles through education programs and physical exams, promoting a safe and healthy environment, and assuring quality health care services in partnership with the community. To locate your local health department visit the website above or call the telephone number.



HOUSING



This Section Includes:

Project Safe Place
Temporary Housing Shelters
Housing Funds
Ways to Find Apartments and Other Rental Housing
Legal Rights as a Tenant or Homeowner
Tips For Renters Including Finding the Right Roommate
Information on Changing Your Mailing Address

Project Safe Place

<http://www.safeplaceservices.org/index.shtml>

Telephone: 1-888-290-7233

This is a national youth outreach program that educates thousands of young people every year about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations on their own. Safe Place creates a network of "Safe Place locations" - youth friendly businesses, schools, fire stations, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs and other appropriate public buildings that display the distinctive yellow and black Safe Place sign. Visit the website or call the listed telephone number to identify facilities that have been designated as "safe places" for immediate housing needs in your area.

In your community there may be shelters available on a year round basis, often open 24 hours a day for those who find themselves homeless. Many of these shelters also offer meals, counseling services, job skills, and referrals to other programs. One of the most common shelters may be operated by a local Salvation Army organization in your community, but you can also find other homeless shelters by searching the telephone book or contacting your local Department of Social Services.

Housing Funds

These funds can be used for things like rent, rent deposits, etc. but not utility costs. Young adults who qualify for these funds were in a foster care living situation on their 18th birthday or were in a relative placement or other court approved family placement that was not the removal home, but the person is not yet 21 years old. If a young adult receives this type of financial assistance, he or she should also receive Housing Services from the agency to help adjust to living in an independent setting. For more information about these funds contact your LINKS coordinator at your local DSS office.

North Carolina Housing Finance Agency

<http://www.nchfa.com>

Telephone: 1-800-393-0988

By visiting this agency's website you can search for affordable housing anywhere in North Carolina. This agency also offers low-cost mortgages and down payment assistance for first-time home buyers, finances affordable homes and apartments, finances the development of housing for people with special needs, finances the rehabilitation of substandard owner-occupied homes, and administers HUD rent assistance contracts for privately owned apartments.

US Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

<http://www.hud.gov/renting/index.cfm>

This website offers links to your rights and responsibilities as an apartment/house renter (also referred to as a tenant), tips all tenants should know, information about public housing, Section 8 housing, and a link to help find affordable rental housing in your area of the state.

Texas Apartment Association

<http://www.taa.org/renterinfo/renting101/>

The Texas Apartment Association Education Foundation's free online Renting 101 course will walk first-time renters through all aspects of making a decision about housing. The website will help you decide whether renting is the right choice for you, and offer valuable tools and tips to help make your renting experience easy and even fun.

Roommate for Housing

<http://www.move.com/rentals/living-with-roommates/Main.aspx>

The idea of a roommate can sound quite appealing when you consider the opportunity to split housing and utility costs, but there are a number of things you should also think about. The above website gives you links to a variety of resources on ways to choose the right roommate, questions to ask a potential roommate, discussions over money, lifestyles, interests, etc. This website also offers the user the option to search for potential roommates in your area, but remember, you'll need to screen the people yourself including performing criminal background checks.

Changing Your Mailing Address

<http://www.usps.com/all/optionsforreceivingmail>

By visiting the above website or your local U.S. Post Office you can request to change your mailing address when you move to ensure that all mail addressed to you will be forwarded to your new home.

MONEY: GETTING & KEEPING IT



This Section Includes:

Ways to Get Money for Many Needed Goods & Services
Ways to Get Money for Rent and Utility Bills
Resources to Help Manage Money and Make Financial
Decisions
Income Tax Information

LINKS Transitional Funds

A limited amount of money may be available to assist youth between the ages of 13 and 20. If funds are available, young people must show a willingness to do their part in achieving independence and take an active role in personal planning for the future. Funds can be used in reaching one or more of these outcomes: 1) economic self-sufficiency; 2) safe and stable housing (except for rent, rent deposits, etc., which can be obtained by using Housing Funds listed under the HOUSING category of this resource guide); 3) academic or vocational achievement; 4) connections to a personal support network; 5) postponed parenthood; 6) avoidance of high risk behaviors and/or 7) access to needed health care not covered by Medicaid or public health insurance. In order to learn more and receive this assistance please contact your local Department of Social Services.

Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing and Utilities

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/workfirst/wfea.htm>

Individuals who are experiencing a financial emergency may be eligible for financial help to pay for housing and utilities. In order to qualify, families must have a child, an income less than 200% of the poverty level, and meet citizenship requirements. In order to learn more about this program and also to apply for this assistance please contact your local Department of Social Services or visit the above website.

Heating/Cooling Utilities Emergency-Crisis Intervention Program

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/crisis/index.htm>

The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) is a federally-funded program that provides financial assistance to low-income households that are in a heating or cooling related emergency and meet certain other requirements. The goal of the program is to help people stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and this reduces the risk of health and safety problems such as illness, fire or eviction. In order to learn more about this program and also to apply for this assistance please contact your local Department of Social Services or visit the above website.

Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/energy/index.htm>

LIEAP is a federally-funded program that provides for a one-time cash payment to help eligible people pay their heating bills. This payment is usually received in February of each year. In order to learn more about this program and also to apply for this assistance please contact your local Department of Social Services or visit the above website.

Practical Money Skills for Life

<http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/english/index.php>

This website offers a number of tools to help you learn more about balancing your money with your goals, budgeting for different events like getting your own apartment or going to college, banking services like checking accounts, saving accounts, etc., how credit cards work, and the advantages to saving money. The site includes calculators and games that help understand these and other money concepts, and you can download many helpful documents including the "College Student Workbook." This workbook is helpful for all young people transitioning to adulthood, not just college.

Consumer Credit Counseling Services (CCCS)

<http://www.debtadvice.org/takethefirststep/locator.html>

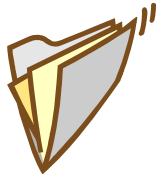
Telephone: 1-800-388-2227

CCCS has branches located throughout North Carolina to assist families and individuals by helping to resolve financial problems, through budget counseling, credit counseling, housing counseling, and debt solver programs. All counseling services are free of charge. CCCS helps people establish and meet financial goals through savings, manage spending for basic expenses, establish good credit, choose the right credit, use credit wisely, buy a home, default resolution counseling, and make other financial decisions. To find a local CCCS office near you, visit the website or call the listed telephone number.

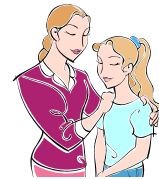
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

<http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96466,00.html>

If you are working outside of the home in a job you will likely need to file an income tax return. As someone new to the workforce, your income may be low enough to qualify for an EITC. When the credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit. You can learn more about filing an income tax return by visiting <http://www.irs.gov> and specific information for the EITC can be found by visiting the first website link listed.



OTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCES



This Section Includes:



Mentoring Programs
Transportation Options

Suggestions on Obtaining School Transcripts, Immunization Records, Your Birth Certificate, a Voter Registration Card, a Social Security Card, and Registering with Selective Service

Mentoring Programs

Many communities have a variety of mentoring programs available to boys and girls of many ages. These programs partner you with a trained adult who serves as a positive role model and introduces you to new social, cultural, physical, and educational activities by including you in his or her daily activities for several hours each week. One national mentoring agency is Big Brothers Big Sisters, and to find the local office near you visit <http://www.bbbs.org>. You may also find other mentoring programs in your area by looking in the telephone book or contacting your local Department of Social Services.

vMentor from the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)

<http://www.orphan.org>

Telephone: (571) 203-0270

OFA's vMentor Program uses technology to match screened, trained, caring volunteer mentors with young adults aging out of foster care. Current and former foster youth ages 18-23 who receive post secondary funding from OFA or who are in an independent living program that partners with OFA are matched with vMentors based on their stated needs, including professional and extracurricular interests. All mentoring is done online using a secure portal, and all communication is monitored to ensure participant safety. Mentors work with youth on issues such as goal planning, course selection and career guidance, and strategies for success in school and in the workplace.

Public Transportation

Depending on the area in which you live you may have a variety of public transportation options. Some places have fixed bus routes while others have shuttles that can be called for specific trips. Some buses offer discounted rates for riders depending on their age or ability to pay, so check into the cost for your area. Check with your city or county's main office regarding public transportation options near you. Depending on your age or custody status you may also be able to arrange transportation for certain trips through your local Department of Social Services.

North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles

<http://www.ncdot.org/DMV/>

Telephone: (919) 715-7000

This department oversees distribution of driver's licenses, learner's permits, vehicle registration, and identification cards that can show proof of residency, social security number, age, and identity. By visiting the listed website or calling the telephone number, you can find out the necessary requirements to obtain all of these documents and find your local DMV office.

School Transcripts and Records

A parent/guardian or a child at least 18 years old has the right to review and inspect his or her school records. In order to do so, the student or guardian must make a request to the school to inspect the records, and the school must make the records available within 45 days of the request. Many schools require that the records be viewed at the school. If the student or guardian believes the school records are wrong, misleading, or a violation of the student's rights, he or she may request that the school change the contents. If this request is refused, the student or guardian must be informed of their right to a hearing by the school.

Immunization Records

At different times in your life, you may be asked to provide your childhood immunization records. If you don't have these documents, you may want to check several different locations. If you know the childhood doctor or medical facility that administered the vaccines they may still have the necessary records. Sometimes schools that you have attended maintain copies of immunization records as well. Your social worker may also be able to help locate these records.

Many records are only stored for a certain length of time so you may be unable to locate these documents, and you may need to get new vaccines.

Birth Certificates

<http://vitalrecords.dhhs.state.nc.us/vr/index.html>

Telephone: (919) 733-3526

If you need a copy of your birth certificate you can contact the North Carolina Vital Records Unit and receive one for a small fee. This agency is responsible for registering all births, deaths, marriages, and divorces which occur in the state, coding events for statistical research purposes, maintaining records, and locating and providing copies of records.

Registering to Vote

Telephone: (919) 733-7173

If you are a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age by the date of the next general election, a legal resident of the county where you wish to vote, and have not committed a felony, then you are legally eligible to register to vote. You can obtain a registration form by visiting <http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us> or by visiting your county's board of election that can be found at <http://www.app.sboe.state.nc.us/about/directors.asp>.

Social Security Card or Social Security Benefits

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>

Telephone: 1-800-772-1213

If you need to obtain a copy of your social security card or if you have questions about social security benefits taken from your paycheck you can contact the United States Social Security Administration at the telephone number above or by visiting the website. This topic may be important for a job or when attempting to verify your identity for other reasons.

Registering with Selective Service

Almost all male U.S. citizens, and male aliens living in the U.S., who are 18 through 25, are required to register with Selective Service. It's important to know that even though you are registered, you will not automatically be inducted into the military. In a crisis requiring a draft, men would be called in sequence determined by random lottery number and year of birth. Then, they would be examined for mental, physical and moral fitness by the military before being deferred or exempted from military service or inducted into the Armed Forces. You may register online with Selective Service at <https://www4.sss.gov/regver/register1.asp>.