

Who can help put together my DCF discharge plan?

There are many people who can help put your discharge plan together so it works best for you. These include:

- other agencies in the community that work with young adults, like DMHAS, the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, or the Department of Social Services
- your educational surrogate
- your lawyer
- your mentor
- your family
- your foster parent
- your therapist or counselor
- anyone else who is important and helpful to you

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

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



Important things to know before you leave DCF

Housing

Before you leave DCF care at age 18 or older, make sure that you either have income to pay rent in an apartment or that you have signed up for help to get and pay for housing. For example, you may go on a Section 8 or other waiting lists for programs that help pay for housing. Do this before you leave DCF care so that you have a place to live when you leave.

Benefits

Before you leave DCF care, you should know what benefits you may be entitled to. For example, you should ask DCF to help you apply for food stamps, Social Security benefits, housing support, state cash assistance, and day care assistance.

You may not qualify for all of these benefits. Ask your social worker to help you figure out if you are eligible and then ask for help to apply. All of this should be reviewed in your discharge plan. For more information on benefits, you visit the DSS office, go to www.ct.gov/dss/site/default.asp or call 800-842-1508.

Food

You may be eligible for food stamps from DSS. Ask your social worker to help you with the application process. For more information about the CT Food Stamp Program, called SNAP at 800-842-1508. If you are denied food stamps, contact End Hunger Connecticut at 860-560-2100.

Education

You have the right to be enrolled in high school until age 21 in the town you live in. If you are between homes, you have the right to continue to go to school where you are living or in the last school you attended. If you are receiving special education services, you have the right to continue to receive those services until age 21, including services which can help you learn to live independently and get a job or go to college.

Make sure that your social worker helps you to enroll or stay enrolled in school if you are leaving DCF. If you have a surrogate parent to help with your education, ask that person to make sure your school plan is set up properly if you are leaving DCF care.

Medical Coverage

You will be eligible for continued medical coverage from the State at least until age 21. Make sure you have your medical card and that you know where to go to see the doctor. If there are issues with your health insurance, call DSS at 800-842-1508.

Documents you should have before you leave DCF:

- Social Security Card
- Credit Check
- Birth Certificate
- Living Will
- Picture ID
- References for employment
- Medical Card
- Contact information for family members

What if I can't get the help I need?

If you are denied a service or help that you think you are supposed to get, you have the right to ask for a hearing. Call DCF at 860-550-6396 for more information about getting a hearing.

Need Help?

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

For information about a hearing, call 860-550-6396.
For the DCF Ombudsman, call 1-866-637-4737.

Department of Social Services (DSS)

For information about housing or benefits, call DSS at 800-842-1508 or go to www.ct.gov/dss.

Center for Children's Advocacy

For information about your legal rights, call 860-570-5327 or 203-223-8975 or go to www.kidscounsel.org/teenlegalrights



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



Center for Children's Advocacy

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I am in DCF Care

What happens when I turn 18?

Can I stay with DCF when I turn 18?

At age 18, each person’s situation is different.

You may want to live with your foster parent or you might want to move to your own apartment.

You may or may not have graduated from high school yet.

If you are not sure what plan is going to be right for you or what living situation DCF will approve, talk to your social worker and your lawyer.

Once you are over 18, you can voluntarily stay with DCF as long as you are in high school, college, or some other educational or job-training program. You can stay in a DCF Independent Living Program until you are 21, as long as you follow the rules of the program. In some cases, you can stay until you are 23.

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

No. If you are married or on active duty in the military, DCF will not provide ongoing services.

Where can I live if I stay with DCF?

You can stay in any DCF-approved home or placement.

This means that if you are in a foster home where you are comfortable, you may be able to stay past age eighteen. You, your social worker and your foster parent will help develop an arrangement that allows you to stay in your home with increasing independence.

DCF also has two main living arrangements for young adults:

Supervised Apartment Program

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

This program also has staff to help you learn to manage your apartment and school or work. The supervised apartment program is also called the Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program. It gives you more independence than you would have in a group home.

To get a copy of the rulebook for one of these programs, go to www.kidscounsel.org/placement_residential_transitional.htm and call one of them.

Independent Apartment Program

The independent apartment program is for youth who have graduated from high school or have a GED, are ready to live on their own, and have completed (or are now in) the life skills class. This program is also called CHAP. In CHAP, you can live in an apartment of your own, or you can live with other people.

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

You will have a case manager who will visit you regularly to see how you are managing your money and to check out your apartment.

You will get a one-time payment of \$200 for household items (pots, pans, towels, vacuum cleaner). You may also get money for college expenses or a work training program.

What else will DCF help me with after age 18?

DCF will pay for your housing, some money for daily living, and an approved job training or academic program. DCF will continue to help you access programs in the community to help with any special needs that you have, like counseling.

DCF wants me to “go with DMHAS.” What does that mean?

This means that DCF wants you to connect with the services provided by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), an agency that helps adults who have a history of mental health diagnosis and treatment.

The DMHAS program for young adults is different than DCF programs. DMHAS has some opportunities for group home living and they may also help you find an apartment that you will pay for on your own. DMHAS may help you pay for the apartment for a short time while you are applying for benefits to pay the rent on your own.

DMHAS can provide support services, such as a therapist, and they can help you apply for benefits, like Social Security, state cash assistance and food stamps. Even if you “go with DMHAS,” you may still be eligible for additional money or financial help for school from DCF.

Each person’s situation is different. If DCF wants you to “go with DMHAS,” talk this over with your lawyer so you can sort out the pros and cons and when it might be best to make this transition.

What if I want to leave DCF?

You are free to leave DCF care at age eighteen, as long as there are no court orders that require you to stay with and cooperate with DCF services. For example, if you are on probation with the criminal court, the judge may have told you to stay with DCF.

If you think you would like to leave DCF care at age 18, please talk about this with your lawyer and your social worker.

Ask for a discharge planning meeting.

You should ask for a discharge planning meeting to talk about how you will meet your own needs after you leave DCF. This meeting should take place no later than 90 days before you leave DCF care.

What should my DCF discharge plan look like?

Before you leave DCF care, make sure that you have a discharge plan that works for you. The law says that you must have a discharge plan at least 90 days before your scheduled discharge from DCF care. Your discharge plan should include:

- where you will live
- what income you will have
- how you will get food, clothing and transportation
- how you will finish school or get a job
- what benefits you might be eligible for to help you support yourself
- what other services in the community can help you once you are on your own

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