| **FACTS ABOUT EXTENDED FOSTER CARE** | **HOW TO EXPLAIN THE FACTS** | **WHAT TO AVOID SAYING** |
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| **Foster youth benefits are being extended to the age of 21 for youth who are in an out of home placement at the age of 18.**  In order to qualify a youth must meet age eligibility requirements and have an open dependency case at age 18 with an order for out of home placement (or an order for out of home placement through the juvenile probation system at age 18). The youth’s dependency case must also have been open with the court on or after January 1, 2012.  Additional eligibility requirements are described below. | **Have you ever been, or are you currently, in the foster care system? Until what age were you in foster care?**  Benefits for foster youth are being extended beginning January 1, 2012. They are extending benefits for youth who were in the foster care system after January 1, 2012 for three additional years - up until the age of 21.  In order to qualify, you must meet age eligibility requirements and have an open dependency case at age 18 with an order from a judge for you to be living away from your biological parents (or an order for out of home placement through the juvenile probation system).  There are a few other things we’ll need to confirm to make sure you’re eligible as well. | Were you in the system or in juvy when you turned 18? How could you not know if you were in the system? Did you live with your real parents? Why were you put in foster care?  You can get more benefits but you have to agree to a bunch of requirements.  **WHY AVOID:** The circumstances surrounding a youth’s participation in foster care can be a sensitive topic and should be discussed respectfully. Don’t probe for information beyond what is needed to determine eligibility for benefits. Students need to feel that they are being supported through the process and that the foster care system is there to help. Avoid overwhelming them by making the requirements sound onerous. |
| **In order to participate in extended foster care, youth will need to satisfy one of the following five participation requirements.**   * Be enrolled in high school or pursuing GED * Be enrolled in college/vocational school/University * Participate in a program/activity that removes barriers to employment such as job search activities, attending classes at the ILP, or participating in substance abuse treatment (these are only examples) * Work at least 80 hours per month * Be unable to do one of the above because of a medical or mental health condition | **You are only required to meet 1 out of these 5 requirements and you get to decide what you want to be doing:**   * Be enrolled in high school or pursuing GED * Be enrolled in college/vocational school/University * Participate in a program/activity that removes barriers to employment such as job search activities, attending classes at the ILP, or participating in substance abuse treatment (these are only examples) * Work at least 80 hours per month * Be unable to do one of the above because of a medical or mental health condition | If you’re not going to school or working you won’t be eligible. Also, if you quit your job or school they can kick you out of foster care. If you have a medical condition you might be able to get out of having to do anything.  **WHY TO AVOID:** Students’ options should be laid out and explained properly. It should be clear that there is a lot of flexibility regarding the options for participation and that temporarily not meeting one of the conditions will not disqualify the youth. The option for a medical exemption should be explained in a way that is sensitive and doesn’t turn the student off from the prospect of utilizing the exemption when appropriate. Be sensitive to students’ situations and their individual needs; be explanatory as well as open and ready for questions. Avoid describing participation requirements in a way that makes them seem punitive. |
| **Youth will need to be willing to meet with a social worker once a month, sign a participation agreement and create a Transitional Independent Living Plan, or TILP.**  Youth will also have a court hearing scheduled every six months and continue to have representation by an attorney. | **You will need to meet with a Social Worker once a month, sign a participation agreement and create a Transitional Independent Living Plan, or TILP.** Keep in mind as a young adult these meetings are for you to discuss your progress and for you and your worker to create a partnership geared towards your success. You are continuing to receive benefits because you are taking the necessary steps needed to make the most of this opportunity to improve your future. The TILP is a tool that will help you to identify goals for yourself and the steps that you need to take to reach your goals. You will also have a court hearing every six months and this will be an opportunity for you to inform the court of how things are going. You will continue to have an attorney who can help you with any legal issues that come up. | Just like when you were in foster care you will need to meet with your social worker once a month and the social worker will check up on you to make sure you’re doing what you agreed to.  **WHY TO AVOID:** Students will most likely not want to participate in a program that is “just like” when they were in foster care. The benefits of staying in foster care should be emphasized rather than focusing solely on the conditions. Meeting with their Social Worker as a young adult should be presented as a collaborative partnership to help support their success. The TILP should be described as a tool that will help them to meet their own goals rather than a “requirement.” |
| **Foster youth who have exited the foster care system may be eligible to re-enter.**  Youth who exited foster care after their 18th birthday have the option to re-enter and resume receiving benefits, including housing. Youth have the right to re-enter if they meet the basic age eligibility requirements and are willing to sign a voluntary re-entry agreement. Youth can re-enter unlimited times before turning 21. The re-entry process has been made as accessible and easy as possible and benefits can begin as soon as the youth signs a re-entry agreement and is living in an approved placement.  (Note: Re-entry options may differ for youth who turned 18 prior to January 1, 2012) | If you want to reenter foster care you can sign a voluntary re-entry agreement and your **benefits will begin as soon as you sign the agreement and enter a licensed or approved placement**. The initial meeting with your Social Worker temporarily satisfies the conditions of your participation while you work on a Transitional Independent Living Plan. Within about 6 weeks you will have a court hearing.  By re-entering the system you will be working with a social worker and you will receive the continuing services and benefits that will help pay for housing, food and general expenses so that you can concentrate on school.  ***Note: The specific process will vary by county and it is helpful to determine the exact mechanism for re-entry in your community so that you can direct youth to the right place.*** | If you want to go back in the system you need to sign this form to be put back into foster care. You need to find your old Social Worker to figure out how to get back in.  **WHY TO AVOID:** Students need to be notified of their right to re-enter foster care and that Extended Foster Care was designed to benefit and work for them. You want to explain that they may begin receiving benefits immediately after signing the voluntary reentry agreement. Most counties will have multiple points of contact for re-entry and the youth is not required to track down their old social worker. |
| **Youth will need to live in a licensed or approved placement setting.**  This can include living with a foster family, relative or extended family member. It can also include living independently with the support of a case manager (through a program called THP-Plus Foster Care) or independently on their own in an apartment, renting a room or living in a dorm. This new independent option is known as a Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP). In a SILP, youth have a lot of flexibility about who they choose to live with and roommates are not required to undergo a background check. Youth can also stay in a group home when necessary to complete high school before turning 19 or because of a medical condition.  In order to live in a SILP the student will be assessed by the Social Worker to determine if they have the ability to handle daily tasks, finances, and be independent. If they’re not ready yet the Social Worker will help them to identify what skills they need to develop to become ready. The physical site is also subject to a health and safety inspection. Youth living in dorms are exempt from both these requirements.  Counties are required to make a grievance process available to settle disputes about placement. Youth also have the right to bring these disputes to court. | **You have more options for where you can live while in Extended Foster Care (EFC) than before you turned 18.** This includes living in your own apartment, with roommates or in a college dorm. If you want to live on your own, you’ll have a lot of flexibility about who you chose to live with. You can also stay with a relative, mentor, adult family friend, or with foster parents (You can also stay in a group home when needed to complete high school before turning 19 or because of a medical condition).  If you want to live on your own, your social worker will discuss the skills that you need to be successful in independent living such as managing your budget, knowing how to get help when to you need it and basic things like cooking and doing laundry to make sure that you are ready to be on your own. If there are skills that you need to develop further, your social worker will help you to figure out how to get those skills before you move into your own place so that you can have the best chance of having it work out.  The social worker will also need to take a look at the place to make sure it is safe. The exception to this is if you’re living in a dorm which is automatically approved.  If you and the social worker disagree about where you should live, you can request a meeting through the county’s grievance process or bring it up in court. | You have more options for where you can live but they will be supervised by your caseworker and wherever you choose to live you will be subject to inspection and home visits. Your social worker can veto any choice that you make about where to live if they don’t think you’re ready.  **WHY TO AVOID:** Students should have the different placement options explained before being informed of the restrictions on placement options. They can be much more independent and by making the inspections and home visits seem like babysitting, the program will be less appealing. This is an opportunity for students to be assisted with accessing and maintaining housing while receiving ongoing support. It should be explained that there are a variety of housing settings available as options and that the program will assist the student to prepare for and succeed in independent living. |