



**TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES** PROVIDE A MULTIPURPOSE, SYSTEMIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS TO HELP IN TRANSITIONING TO A SUCCESSFUL ADULTHOOD THROUGH COORDINATED PERMANENCY AND TRANSITION PLANNING. THE PROVISION OF **TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES** INCLUDES ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT BENEFITS, SUPPORTS, AND RESOURCES THAT AFFECT BOTH OLDER YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AND THOSE WHO HAVE AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE. **TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES** APPLY TO YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT'S AGES 14 UP TO AGE 23 (DEPENDING ON THE PROGRAM) AND UP TO AGE 26 FOR CONTINUOUS HEALTHCARE COVERAGE.

### **Experiential Life Skills Training**

Foster parents and other providers are required to train youth age **14** and older in life skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, nutrition education and cooking, use of public transportation when appropriate, financial literacy training to include money management, credit history, balancing a checkbook and performing basic household tasks. If a youth has a source of income the provider will assist in establishing a savings account for the youth. In addition, foster parents and providers must connect youth and young adults to community resources such post-secondary education; employment; and vocational/technical school opportunities. These life skills activities provided by the caregiver along with the receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's plan of service and transition plan. [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x10000.asp#CPS\\_10111](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10000.asp#CPS_10111)

### **ACCESS Granted-Texas Foster Care Handbook**

This handbook helps children and youth in foster care to better understand how the foster care system works and to address many of the questions and concerns they have regarding foster care. It provides information in an understandable manner on topics such as the CPS chain of command, the rights of children/youth while in foster care, health passport, the education portfolio, transition plans and Transitional Living Services. <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/documents/foster-care-handbook.pdf>

### **Transition Planning/Permanency Conference Planning for Older Youth**

By participating in permanency planning meetings such as Permanency Conferences, Circles of Support or Transition Plan Meetings youth help in the development of a transition plan. The transition plan identifies services for each youth to accomplish goals to assist them in obtaining positive permanency or to transition successfully from foster care. The plan is attached to the youth's **plan of service** to ensure consistency of services. Identifying caring adults for youth and involving them in transition planning help to ensure personal and community connections are incorporated into the transition planning process. Transition planning continues to be conducted for those young adults in the Extended Foster Care program. [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/cps/files/CPS\\_pg\\_1120.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/cps/files/CPS_pg_1120.asp)

### **Circle of Support (COS)**

A COS is a youth driven process beginning at **16** years of age (or as early as age **14** in some cases) and may take the place of the required permanency planning meetings as a means of developing a transition plan. The COS is facilitated by the family conference specialist. The COS is coordinated with participants that a youth identifies as "caring adults" who make up their support system. COS participants can include a youth's birth family members, foster care providers, teachers, church members, a mentor and so on. Participants meet to develop and review the youth's permanency and transition plan, identify strengths, goals and needs in the areas of permanency, education, employment, health/mental health needs, housing, and PAL life skills training components

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/circles\\_of\\_support.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/circles_of_support.asp)

### **OTHER INFORMATION-Under 18:**

**FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN-(1-844-286-0769)** This is an HHSC position that will investigate complaints and possible rights violations of children and youth in foster care under age 18. The Ombudsman ensures that youth understand their rights while in foster care; reviews a youth's concerns about case specific questions and



complaints; and with a youth's permission work with other people to improve their care. Complaints are kept confidential without threat of retaliation. [hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x11000.asp)

### **Medical Consent**

A youth in foster care who is at least **16** years old may consent to receiving medical care if the court with continuing jurisdiction determines that the youth has the capacity to consent to medical care. Caregivers are required to advise youth of their right to request to become their own medical consenters.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x11000.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x11000.asp)

### **Driver License Fee Waiver**

Driver license fees are waived for youth in DFPS temporary or permanent managing conservatorship and for young adults at least **18** years of age, but younger than age **21**, who reside in a DFPS **paid** foster care placement.

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/Driver\\_Licenses\\_for\\_Youth\\_in\\_Conservatorship\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Driver_Licenses_for_Youth_in_Conservatorship_Resource_Guide.pdf)

### **Credit Reports**

Every youth in the conservatorship of DFPS age **14** up to age **18** are informed that a credit report is run annually, until discharged from DFPS care. In addition to ensuring that the youth is notified that a report was run, the caseworker will explain the credit report and the importance of maintaining good credit. A young adult in Extended Foster care requests their own report at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>.

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/Personal\\_Documents\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Personal_Documents_Resource_Guide.pdf)

### **Provision of Personal Documents/Records-Ages 16 and 18**

Age **16**-Youth in DFPS conservatorship on or before they turn age 16 must be provided with a copy or original document of a:

- birth certificate; and
- Social Security card or replacement Social Security card, as appropriate; and
- Personal identification certificate/card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Age **18**-Young Adults who age out DFPS foster care will receive either a copy or original personal documents (if not already provided) and other information. These include:

- A birth certificate;
- A Social Security card or a replacement Social Security card;
- A personal state identification certificate/card issued by DPS;
- Immunization records;
- Information contained in the youth's health passport;
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate;
- Medical Power of Attorney Information-Forms 2559 A and B
- *Almost 18 Letter*; and
- Youth Transition Portfolio

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource\\_Guides/Personal\\_Documents\\_Resource\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Personal_Documents_Resource_Guide.pdf)

A young adult may requests copies of these documents and other personal CPS records from *DFPS Records Management*. Information on how to make record requests is at: [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/legal/personal\\_docs.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/legal/personal_docs.asp)

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES/PROGRAMS**

### **Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program**

The PAL program assists older youth in foster care prepare for their departure and transition to a successful adulthood. Supportive services and benefits are provided by PAL Staff or PAL Contract Providers to eligible young adults up to age **21** to become self-sufficient and productive. PAL is funded by the *federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*, State general revenue funds and/or community match (20%).

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x10200.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10200.asp)



PAL services include:

- **Life skills assessment** (Casey Life Skills Assessment) to assess strength and needs in life skills attainment [www.caseylifeskills.org](http://www.caseylifeskills.org) (assessments are conducted before Life skills training):
- **Life skills training** (age **16 to 18**) in the following core areas:
  - Health and Safety;
  - Housing and Transportation;
  - Job Readiness;
  - Financial Management;
  - Life Decisions/Responsibility;
  - Personal/Social Relationships
  - Educational/vocational services
- **Supportive services** (based on need and funding availability) may include:
  - graduation items,
  - counseling,
  - tutoring,
  - driver's education fees, or
  - mentoring.
- A **transitional living allowance** of up to \$1,000 is distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who participated in PAL training, to help with initial start-up costs in adult living.
- **Aftercare room and board assistance** (ages 18-21) is based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult).
- **Case management** to help young adults with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

\*\*\*Contact Regional PAL Staff for more information about all Transitional Living Services at:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Preparation\\_For\\_Adult\\_Living/PAL\\_coordinators.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp)

### **Extended Foster Care Program**

With the implementation of the federal **Fostering Connections Act** (*Title IV-E of the Social Security Act*), a young adult who ages out of foster care at age 18 is eligible for Extended Foster Care provided there is an available placement, the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets at least one of the following conditions:

18 up to 22 year olds, and:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or is

18 up to 21 years old and;

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

**For more information about Extended Foster Care Go to:**

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x10400.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x10400.asp)

### **Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Program**

The SIL program is a component of the Extended Foster Care program and allows young adults to live independently under a minimally supervised living arrangement provided by a DFPS contracted provider. A young adult in SIL is not supervised 24-hours a day and is allowed increased responsibilities, such as managing their own finances, buying groceries/personal items, and working with a landlord. Living arrangements may include apartments, non-college and college dorm settings, shared housing and host home settings. Individuals are assisted in transitioning to independent living, achieving identified education and employment goals,



accessing community resources, engaging in needed life skills trainings, and establishing important relationships. Young adults must apply for and be accepted into the SIL program.

**For more information about SIL go to:**

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/Extended\\_Foster\\_Care/supervised\\_independent\\_living.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/supervised_independent_living.asp)

### **Return for the Extended Foster Care Program**

Young adults who aged out of DFPS conservatorship may return at any time up until the age of 21 to participate in the Extended Foster Care Program if the required stipulations are met:

- Is offered an available placement;
- Understand that court jurisdiction will be extended, if the court permits;
- Sign or re-sign a Voluntary Extended Foster Care agreement; and
- Agrees to meet one of the criteria described in the Extended Foster Care program within 30 days of being placed.

PAL staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care and refer to the regional re-entry staff. **Regional Re-entry Staff Contact List-**

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/Extended\\_Foster\\_Care/Re-entry\\_Liaisons.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/Re-entry_Liaisons.asp)

## **OTHER RELATED INFORMATION**

### **Trial Independence Period (TI)**

A young adult in DFPS conservatorship who turns 18 as well as a young adult enrolled in the Extended Foster Care Program may leave foster care for a "trial independence" period of 6 months (or up to 12 months with a court order). During the TI period, the young adult may be living independently and receiving other transitional living benefits such as PAL, ETV, and Texas Medicaid.

### **Extended Court Jurisdiction**

Young adults that leave foster care at age 18 for a TI period will have court jurisdiction extended for 6 months. Additionally court jurisdiction may be extended for a 12 month TI period if ordered by the court. If a young adult is in Extended Foster Care, court jurisdiction will continue during this period but will not exceed the month of their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_5600.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_5600.asp)

## **POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INFORMATION**

### **Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program**

ETV is a *federally-funded (Chafee)* and state-administered program. Based on the cost of attendance as established by higher education, youth in foster care or other eligible youth and young adult's ages 16 up to the age of 23 may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance per year to help them reach their postsecondary education goals if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Have a high school diploma or GED or be exempt from required school attendance; or
- The student is enrolled in a dual-credit course or other course at an institution of higher education for which the student will earn a high school diploma and college credit.

#### **Individuals eligible for ETV include:**

- Youth in DFPS foster care who are at least **16** and likely to remain in care until **18**; or
- Youth who aged out of DFPS foster care but have not yet turned **21**; or
- Youth who were adopted from DFPS foster care after turning age **16** and are not yet **21**; or
- Youth who enter Permanency Care Assistance after age **16**; or
- Youth who are in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (formerly TJJC) and are in a Title IV-E placement when turning age **18**; or
- Tribal youth or young adults in tribal foster care; or
- The above eligible students who move out of state to attend school and were originally enrolled in ETV in Texas.



**ETV program participation requirements**-Students must apply for and be approved for ETV before his or her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, meet school enrollment requirements, and be enrolled in at least 6 semester hours in an *accredited or pre-accredited* public or private, non-profit program/institution that:

- provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or certification; or
- provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment; or
- has been in existence for two years and offers training programs to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than one year).

Students participating in the ETV Program on their 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday as long as they are enrolled in ETV and meeting the satisfactory academic progress policies toward completing their postsecondary education or training program as determined by the institution. After age 21, the student must be continuously enrolled in the institution to remain eligible for the ETV program up to their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

Students interested in specific educational programs through *Correspondence Courses, Distance Education Courses, or Continuing Education* courses must contact ETV staff for prior approval to ensure proper school accreditation and that courses lead to a degree or recognized certificate program. Courses must apply to a Student's academic degree or certificate program.

**Note:** Youth or young adults in DFPS **paid** foster care, enrolled in higher education and eligible for ETV may have certain expenses paid by the ETV program (ex., books, computers, child care, and transportation). ETV will not cover residential housing, personal items and food since this is provided for in the placement.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/ETV.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/ETV.asp)

Apply for the ETV Program at: <http://www.texasetv.com> or call toll free 877-268-4063.

### **College Tuition and Fee Waiver**

The college tuition and fee waiver provides exemptions from payment of tuition and fees at a Texas **state supported college or university** to individuals formerly in **Texas** state foster care and adopted youth. To be exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, youth or young adults must have been in DFPS conservatorship. Exemptions occur:

- the day before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- the day of the student's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, if the youth was eligible for adoption (parental rights terminated) on or after that day;
- the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- if a youth was adopted and the adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009;
- if permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) of the youth was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009; or
- if a youth was returned to the legal responsibility of the parent at:
  - age 14 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's *permanent* managing conservatorship; or
  - age 16 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's *temporary* managing conservatorship; or
- when a student is enrolled in a dual credit course or other courses in which the student may earn joint high school and college credit and if tuition hasn't been waived. *Note: Youth enrolled in a dual credit course may enroll in the ETV program to have some education expenses covered.*

Youth or young adults must check with each school to ensure that the courses they are enrolling in are exempt from tuition and fees. Some vocational / certificate courses may not be exempt from tuition and fees. Young adults must be enrolled in a Texas state supported college or university **no later than his or hers 25<sup>th</sup> birthday**.



*Adopted youth* who are subject to an adoption assistance agreement that provides monthly stipends and Medicaid benefits are eligible for the college tuition and fee waiver. For these students there is no age limit to enroll in college in order to take advantage of the tuition and fee waiver.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/state\\_college\\_tuition\\_waiver.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/state_college_tuition_waiver.asp)

Reference the *Texas Education Code*-Sec. 54.366 and 54.367 (2009) and Section 700.1630, Subchapter P of the Texas Administrative Code (2016).

### **DFPS College Scholarships:**

#### **Freshmen Success Fund for Foster Youth (est. April 2013)**

This is a grant for first time college freshmen formerly in DFPS foster care. Each year there will be 4 one time grants of \$1,000 available for young adults enrolling in their freshmen year. These grants are to cover basic non-tuition related expenses such as books and supplies, computers and software, tools and uniforms and transportation. Students must be enrolled in a Texas state-supported college, university, or vocational/technical school that accepts the state college tuition and fee waiver.

#### **C. Ed Davis-PAL Scholarship (est. July 2012)**

This scholarship is for basic non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. Scholarships are for \$1,000 per academic year and are available to *sophomore, junior or senior* year students. More information about these scholarships is available at: [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Education/other\\_resources.asp#scholarships](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Education/other_resources.asp#scholarships)

#### **College Resources for Foster Care Students**

##### **Temporary Housing Assistance between Academic Terms**

Texas' institutes of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have been legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices.

##### **College Foster Care Student Liaisons**

As of January 2016 each state supported college/university has appointed a foster care student liaison to help foster care students in coordinating college readiness and student success. Liaisons can help students navigate the college system and connect them to resources needed to achieve higher education goals. A list of liaisons is located at: <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=429> under "Eligible Institutions".

##### **Bacterial Meningitis Vaccine for Students Entering Post-Secondary Education**

Students under age 30 entering a Texas institution of higher education must be vaccinated for bacterial meningitis. For DFPS foster youth, payments for doctor's visits and vaccination costs are covered by the **FFCC** Medicaid (STAR Health or STAR) program.

### **Texas Medicaid-Former Foster Youth (18-25) and OTHER HEALTHCARE INFORMATION**

#### **Former Foster Care Children (FFCC) Program**

The **FFCC** program provides continuous healthcare coverage through age 25 to young adults who age out of Texas foster care and are receiving Medicaid when they aged out. This population will receive healthcare services in two separate programs based on age;

- Young adults aged 18 through 20 will be enrolled in STAR Health but can switch to STAR upon request; and
- Young adults aged 21 through 25 will receive Medicaid through the STAR plan of their choice.

To be eligible for the FFCC program, the young adult must:

- Be age 18 through 25;



- Have been in Texas foster care on his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or older;
- Be receiving Medicaid when he or she aged out of Texas foster care; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or be a qualified alien for example have an I-551 permanent resident card.

### **Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth (MTFCY)**

Provides medical coverage to young adults age 18 through 20 who are not eligible for the FFCC program because they were not receiving Medicaid at the time they aged out of foster care. The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Be age 18 through 20 years of age;
- Have been in Texas foster care at age 18, or older;
- Have no other healthcare coverage;
- Meet program rules for income; and
- Be a U.S. Citizen or have a qualified alien status.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/medical\\_benefits.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/medical_benefits.asp)

### **Superior Healthplan-a2A CentAccount® Rewards Program (<https://www.fostercaretx.com>)**

This program offers reward dollars of up to \$160 for members who complete wellness visits, dental check-ups and other health screenings for members ages 18 through 21 years old. Visit the Texas Youth Connection-HEALTH section for more information: <https://www.fostercaretx.com/for-members/transitioning-youth/a2a.html>

### **Your Texas Benefits**

Young adults should be directed to use [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) including using the mobile app to manage their benefits at any time and place. The website and mobile app can be used to apply for and renew benefits and report changes such as an address update. STAR Member Helpful Numbers: **1-800-964-2777** or **1-866-912-6283**.

### **Health Passport**

The Health Passport is a computer-based system that has health data about youth and young adults in the STAR Health program. The Health Passport is not a full medical record. It has information on doctor and dentist visits, hospital stays, prescriptions and shot records. If a young adult wants access to his or hers Health Passport visit <https://www.superiorhealthplan.com/login.html> NOTE: Young adults must register for their Health Passport before exiting foster care by using his or hers Personal ID number that is available from the caseworker.

### **2-1-1 TEXAS**

Young adults can call **2-1-1** to report any changes to an address, their case, check benefits, and request a Medicaid card. The young adults should identify as a "former foster youth" and notify the staff that they are calling about the **Former Foster Care Children** or **Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth** programs. Additionally, **2-1-1** may be contacted for non-medical issues such as applying for food stamps and family medical assistance. Information is at <https://www.211texas.org/211/>.

## **OTHER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT RESOURCES**

**Texas Youth Hotline** is a resource for youth, parents, siblings and other family members who are in need of a caring voice and a listening ear. Individuals may contact the statewide hotline at **1-800-989-6884** for telephone counseling, information, and referrals or CHAT online or **TEXT 512-872-5777** for assistance. The hotline can help locate services available in local communities. More information is available at the [Texas Youth and Runaway Hotline](http://TexasYouthandRunawayHotline) website.

**Texas Youth Connection** is a website designed with input from youth and young adults and is a resource for youth in the Texas foster care system, alumni of foster care, and stakeholders seeking general tips and information. This website offers information and resources about safety and well-being, education, finances/banking, records, healthcare, contacts, jobs, housing, Transition Center information, PAL contact



information and other useful information. This website is also the location of the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Youth Survey- <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/Default.asp>

**Texas Youth Connection-FACEBOOK PAGE** is another source for youth and young adults to find current, relevant resources, information, and other trending topics beneficial to the youth and young adult's transition to adulthood. This page allows DFPS to stay connected with youth and young adults using a popular social media website. The page is located at [www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection](http://www.facebook.com/TexasYouthConnection).

**Statewide Youth Leadership Council (YLC)** is comprised of two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) per region. The purpose of the statewide YLC is to provide a forum for youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care to address identified issues and concerns about experiences in the DFPS foster care system and to make recommendations about improving services to children and youth in foster care. Upon request by CPS, the YLC reviews state policies and programs and provides feedback.

**Youth Specialists (alumni of foster care)** are hired as full time or part time employees in each DFPS region, one is located at the DFPS State Office. Youth Specialists play a key role in the development and support of Youth Leadership Councils, ensure that the voices of foster youth are heard, and engage foster youth in advocating activities. Youth specialists also serve to help strengthen and support CPS casework by informing DFPS of initiatives and activities affecting policy and practice.

#### **National Youth in Transition Data Base (NYTD)**

NYTD is a data collection system created to track independent living services and to learn how successful states are in preparing youth to move from foster care into adulthood. Texas surveys youth in foster care when they turn age 17 and conducts follow-up surveys of some of these same youth at age 19 and again at age 21. Every three years a new cohort of 17 year olds is surveyed.

#### **Employment Preference to Former Foster Youth**

Texas state agencies are required to give an employment preference to former foster youth (in the PMC of DFPS on the day of the young adult's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday) over other state applicants for the same position who do not have a greater qualification. An individual is entitled to an employment preference only if the young adult is 25 years of age or younger (day before turning 26). PAL staff will issue the employment preference letter to eligible young adults when they turn 18 or upon request.

### **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR YOUTH**

- **PAL Experiential Camp**-A camp held annually for youth (when a contractor is available) aimed at increasing self-esteem, improving communication skills, problem-solving and having fun.
- **PAL Statewide Teen Conference**-An annual three day conference held on a college campus offering workshops for youth that lead to self-sufficiency and independence.
- **PAL College Conferences**-Texas A&M Commerce and Lone Star College each host an annual two day conference for youth to learn about and prepare for higher education opportunities to include vocational programs.
- **Aging-Out Seminars** -Regions provide seminars to youth at age 17 before they leave care. Seminars include topics identified by youth to reinforce their knowledge and skills about DFPS programs, benefits, resources and other life skills such as nutrition and information about human trafficking. These seminars build on information from PAL Life Skills Training classes.
- **Regional Youth Leadership Councils (YLC) or Youth Advisory Boards**- Benefits of youth participation in a YLC include:
  - Opportunities for Community Services and Outreach projects to support foster youth;
  - Advocacy training to ensure the voices of foster youth are heard and incorporated into policy and practice;
  - Leadership building skills;
  - Planning and facilitating events;
  - Learn how to strategically share their story; and
  - Developing supportive friendships/caring adults





- **Regional conferences or events-** Regions provide teen conferences and other age-appropriate activities and events such as college conferences, back to school events, prom events, graduation celebrations, or holiday celebrations.

## **Partnerships**

**Transition Centers** provide one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of current and former foster youth, homeless youth, or other at-risk youth. Services may include employment assistance, educational support, access and referrals to community partners and resources and various transitional living services such as PAL classes, food and housing assistance, and substance abuse / mental health counseling. Transition Centers also provide co-location opportunities for local partners such as local Workforce Solutions staff, TWC funded Workforce Advocates, and colleges and universities to jointly serve the diverse needs of the youth in one location. As of March 2016 there are 16 Transition Centers which are independently funded, operated and supported by partnerships between DFPS, their Providers, community partners and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). A list of these Centers with contact information is available at the Texas Youth Connection Contacts page: [DFPS Regional Transition Centers](#)

**[Texas Workforce Commission/Local Workforce Boards Partnership:](#)** DFPS regional offices and 28 local Workforce Development Boards have jointly developed and entered into agreements addressing the unique challenges facing current and former foster youth transitioning to a successful adulthood, including improving employment outcomes for these youth. The purpose of the MOU relates to:

- Furthering the objectives of the DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program;
- Ensuring services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of current and former foster youth; and
- Making referrals, where feasible, for short term housing for foster youth who need housing.

DFPS staff, caregivers, and PAL contractors refer youth ages 16 and older to local *Texas Workforce Solutions* office's for job search and readiness assistance, career exploration, and employment and training services. Each Board has designated a point of contact for staff and youth to access for assistance and services. All youth and young adults are encouraged to register in the state job search system [www.WorkInTexas.com](http://www.WorkInTexas.com).

**Contact Information is at:** <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/Default.asp>