

Foster Care Association of Victoria Position:

The FCAV strongly believes that young people should begin preparing for their transition to independence from an early age. Developing skills such as problem solving, dealing with people they do not know, as well as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, and driving are basic requirements for a successful adult life. Each agency has its own leaving care program which helps to ensure young people leaving care are prepared for the process. We recommend that you contact your agency for more information.

Another vital aspect to post 18 transitioning from care is where does a young person live? And how do they manage financially? Some young people will remain with their foster families but will no longer be subject to a protective court order; therefore their carers will no longer be eligible to receive care giver reimbursements. This fact sheet is designed to assist carers and young people with the financial aspects when a young person in home based care turns 18 years of age.

Department of Human Services

Leaving Care Services

Eligibility for services

Leaving Care services are specifically for any young person under the age of 21 who was subject to a court order (Custody or Guardianship) on or after their 16th birthday.

Support is available to those young people transitioning from care or who have left care and subsequently needs support. Each DHS region has the following Leaving Care programs:

- Leaving Care Mentoring,
- Post Care Support, Referral & Information Services, and
- Leaving Care Brokerage Funding (**LCBF**)

The **LCBF** is aimed at providing a flexible financial support for young people who have been in State care up to the age of 21 years. The use of brokerage is strictly focused on supports that directly benefit the young person's transition to or maintenance of independent living. This can include:

- Education & Training
- Establishment Costs
- Legal Costs
- Medical Costs (only those not covered by Medicare)
- Official documents
- Life skills education
- Travel to see family

Enquiries about Leaving Care Brokerage go via Home Based Care agencies to regional Placement and Support units.

The DHS Leaving Care Helpline is now available. Call 1300 532 846 or go to www.cyf.vic.gov.au/leavingcare .

Care Giver payments

Carers of Child Protection clients who turn 18 and are attending secondary school, are eligible for continued carer reimbursements until the end of the school year in which the young person turns 18, if the young person continues to reside in their care. Further, if these same young people continue their secondary education in the calendar year beyond which they turn 18, and remain with their carer, reimbursements will be extended for a further school year. Carers wanting to find out more information should speak with their foster care agency, or local Child Protection office.

Regional Financial Support

There is also an expectation that DHS provide young people leaving care with the equivalent of \$1000 worth of assistance from their regional budget.

However each DHS region provides these services in different ways so it is best to contact the relevant region via your home based care agency to determine what form this support may take in your region.

State Concessions

Young people leaving care who hold a Healthcare Card may also be entitled to a range of concessions. More information is available at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions/home

Commonwealth

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Transition to Independent Living Allowance: (TILA)

TILA is a one-off grant of \$1,500 from the Australian Government. Its purpose is to assist young people (15-25 years*) who are making the transition from formal and informal care to independent living.

Web information and application forms are available at - www.tila.org.au

TILA can be used to pay for:

- Connection to Utilities to assist in the establishment of housing
- Moving expenses
- White goods
- Furnishings
- Financial or other counselling
- Education
- Transport

*Conditions apply – see the website

Centrelink

Centrelink have a number of financial supports for which young people leaving care may be eligible. It is important that they make an appointment with the social work unit at their nearest Centrelink office to learn about their entitlements and apply for benefits.

Contact the Centrelink Youth Allowance Unit on 13 24 90 for information and appointments with Centrelink Social Work Units.

It is important that young people receive information on;

- Youth Allowance
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/ya_eligible.htm
- Youth Allowance – Independence Test
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/ya_independent.htm
- Rent Assistance
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/rent_eligible.htm

General information is available at the Centrelink internet site www.centrelink.gov.au
Follow the links to Youth Allowance or to Rent Assistance

Other Supports

Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (Victoria) at: www.ocsc.vic.gov.au

Legal Aid Victoria at: www.legalaidvictoria.gov.au

Tenants Union Victoria at: www.tuv.org.au

Good site with lots of information for young people at: www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

Centre for Excellence in Child & Family Welfare: The Centre's scholarship program – Chasing your dreams, look on the Website www.cwav.asn.au or contact The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare on (03) 9614 1577 for more information about how to apply for a scholarship for further education support.

CREATE Foundation at: www.createyourfuture.org.au

CREATE have developed a new website with information that is specific to leaving care. This site includes:

- Blogs
- Information on education
- Links to financial assistance
- Links to grants currently available and how to access them

Watch out for the CREATE CYF grants announced around March/ April each year. This grant aims at allowing a small number of care leavers to access funds between \$300 and \$3000 and young people can apply for help with stuff like driving lessons, education and training, travel and conferences. To make sure that the young person in your care for knows when the grants are open, sign them up to Club CREATE and they will be notified via mail the dates to apply. To sign up a young person simply go to www.create.org.au or call CREATE on 1800655105.