

GUIDE FOR YOUTH AGING OUT OF CARE FROM TAYLOR COUNTY

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BIG COUNTRY CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates For Children

ABILENE, TEXAS

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WOW!

First, you have survived being in the Texas Foster Care System. That speaks to your resiliency, tenacity, and ability to adjust, adapt, and overcome. Now you are an adult. Most likely, on your own, making your own decisions, being courageous and conquering the world but you may also feel like you are at a crossroad and there are decisions to be made about your future success.

This guide is to help you continue your path, along with tips, resources, and contacts to better equip you as you continue your best attempt in living out your dreams. You can do this!

Use the pocket guide provided with this guide for more complete information and resources.



The following information is truly just the highlights of getting you started on your independent living journey. The information is not in totality and may change due to resources and funding with each entity. This guide gives you a simple place to get started. As you engage with the places listed, they can provide additional information and referrals.

HOUSING

If you are not in foster care, then where will you be? Where will you sleep, hang your clothes, shower, and eat your meals? In answering this, where will you be safe? If you find yourself in an unsafe situation, Harmony House may be able to help. They have a 24-hour **emergency** line (417) 864-7233.

You also have the option of participating in the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) and as a former foster youth, your request can receive priority in finding a unit for you. This is a federal program through the Housing for Urban Development (HUD). This assistance is for 3 years unless you receive an extension. To reach HUD call (325) 676-6385 ext. 6325. To access this benefit, you need a referral from 2INGage or BCFS. Call either HUD or contact your 2INGage or BCFS worker and together they can all help you get on the list for housing.

The key to locating an FYI unit is to stay in contact with the HUD case manager. They are located at 1149 E. South 11th Street. They can provide lists of available units. When it comes to furnishing your unit, **contact West Texas Homeless Network (WTHN)** so they can point you in the right direction. Their number is (325) 260-1417.

Our House is operated by the BCFS Health and Human Services Community Services Division. They can help in your transition. Their website is texasetv.com/ourhouse/ and phone number is (325) 692-0033. If you are willing, they can help you be the success you envision. There are rules to follow for your safety but this will help you gain independence.

Harmony House is a great resource for an emergency shelter. They are located at 305 Grape Street. Their website is <https://www.harmonyfamilyservices.org/> and you can refer yourself or request information about shelter services.

The Noah Project may also be able to help. You can call them at (325) 767-7107 or toll free 800-444-3551. They can help with food, clothing, legal services, transportation, safety planning, and so much more. Don't hesitate to call.

If you find yourself experiencing homelessness, the Salvation Army can provide shelter. Their address is 1726 Butternut Street, and their number is (325) 677-1408. They also provide help with food and clothing, counseling and lots of other support services to help you get on your feet.

Hendrick Home After Care is for youth who turn 18 years old while in basic care and have completed high school. If you meet this criteria, you are eligible for the After Care program at HHC. The purpose of this program is to help graduates become self-sufficient and provide a living for themselves while they pursue higher education. Young adults in the After Care program are assisted with budgeting and financial preparation for eventual independent living. They may pursue higher education or attend a certification program with the aid of the Home's "After Care" scholarship program. To contact them you can call 325-692-0112 or visit their website at <https://hendrickhome.org/after-care/>.

The bottom line is do not hesitate to reach out to the abundance of resources available to you. Having aged out of foster care does have its benefits and one of them is that you are a priority.



EMPLOYMENT

When it comes to financially supporting yourself there are several options to get the help you need. Depending on where you see yourself starting out or what works for you, there are people who want to help you. If you are wanting to stay low key but simply want a better life, then give FaithWorks a call at (325) 437-2272. They have a series of classes designed to help you get information, knowledge and experience to become better prepared for employment. FaithWorks can help guide you in your career choice and improve your job-seeking skills, which will help you interview effectively and improve your chances of getting the job. FaithWorks of Abilene – It's never too late to become what you might have been. For more details visit their website.

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) can assess your skills and career interests to better serve you in gaining the education, experience and career you need. You will need a referral, but you can do that yourself by stopping by their location at 500 Chestnut Street. They are in the Enterprise building on the 11th floor. They have priority assistance for youth who have been in foster care. You may also call (325) 795-4200. In case you don't know it, there are some state jobs that only former foster children can fill. Your avenue to these services/jobs is through Texas Workforce Solutions. Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, TX | Official Website wfwct.org Click on the Jobs Now icon for more details.

Christian Women's & Men's Job Corp can also help. They are located at 525 Beech Street and their number is (325) 701-9250. They can provide information that will improve your opportunities for jobs that help you meet your needs. They will assist you in developing the skills you need to get a job and keep it along with teaching your some basic life skills which will improve your daily living. Job Training website is located at cwjcabilene.org.

Even Goodwill can offer one-on-one training to help you reach your goals and secure meaningful employment. You can visit their web-site at goodwillwesttexas.org and complete an appointment request form. You may also visit the Career Center located in Abilene at 2200 North 1st Street. If you take the bus there, you will need to be on Route #8. You can reach them at (325) 676-7925.

FOOD

If you find yourself in need of food, Call 211 (Option 1) and they can help connect you to essential community services or call (877) 541-7905. You can also search online for services at 211texas.org. Enter what you need (i.e. food pantries), and your zip code (79601 or 79602 works if you are not sure of your zip code). There are multiple locations that pop up beneath the map with times that each specific location is open. You can also visit <https://acallforhelp.communityos.org/>. These 211 websites can be your absolute "Go To" because of the many resources you can see by using the drop-down boxes on these sites.

Christian Services Center also has a food pantry. Visit their website CSCAbilene. They are located at 3185 N. 10th Street and their number is (325) 673-7531. They offer several other support services and care deeply about you and your success.

Love and Care Ministries located at 233 Fannin Street can also has a food pantry and a clothes closet. Their website lcmmin.com can provide you information on their services and hours they are open. You can also call them at (325) 670-0246.

You do not have to go without food, shelter or safety. Abilene is blessed to have a long list of those willing to help.

HIGHER EDUCATION & GED

Your ETV (Education Training Voucher) is the golden key to success and you making the difference in your own life. You should have received this after leaving care, but in case you didn't or you misplaced it, you can call 1-877-268-4063 and speak to an ETV staff member. You can also talk to your after-care worker or visit Education Training Voucher/Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (ETV/ETV-URM) – Community Services Division (CSD) bcfscsd.org.

For qualifying colleges visit <http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/>. To find qualifying trade schools and learn about career options visit <https://www.trade-schools.net/>.

****Keep in mind that you must complete at least one class before you turn 23 to keep your waiver active or you risk losing benefits.**

If you are in college or trade school, you may qualify for up to **\$5,000 depending on the cost of tuition. Contact BCFS at 100 Chestnut St, Suite #200 in Abilene or call (325) 692-0033.**

If you want to complete your GED, you can contact the Abilene ISD at their Alta Vista learning Center. Their number is (325)671-4419 extension 8661 or visit them at 1929 S. 11th St. You may be eligible for \$145 worth of free GED testing. You must have a valid Texas ID and Social Security card before starting class.

Triumph Public High School is another option. They are located at 221 Oak St. or call (325) 437-0488. **You can also complete an application on their website at triumphpublicschools.org.**

TRANSPORTATION

The most used form of public transportation is City Link. They offer travel training programs to gain understanding of the bus route system, and all services offered. To sign up for the training you can call 325-676-6BUS Option 2. The main number for all other questions is 325-676-6402 or you can find more information at <https://www.abilenetx.gov/citylink>.

Another option for transportation is Medicaid transportation. This is used for non-emergency medical rides such as doctor and dental appointments, or hospital visits. Call 877-633-8747 or visit <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/health/medicaid-chip/medicaid-chip-members/medical-transportation-program>.

LEGAL CONCERNS

If you have a good relationship with your CPS attorney ad litem, you can ask them for help. If you are no longer in care, they may not be able to advise you or represent you but they are a good contact to start with.

Contact Legal Aid of Northwest Texas at (325) 677-8591 for other legal questions. They will decide if you qualify for their program. Their office is located at 500 Chestnut St.

Hopefully not, but if you find yourself in a serious legal situation, the court will appoint you an attorney for criminal cases.

RESOURCES

Contact the PAL supervisor for Region 2 at 2INGage. The number is (325) 721-9733. They will know who to connect you with for services.

Don't forget about the library. There are **multiple** locations that can help you with an assortment of resources including computer and internet access.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Do not be afraid to reach out to anyone at CASA to help you navigate your way. CASA is very resourceful and willing to help guide you and help you access resources so you can live independently and successfully. It's hard work being an adult and juggling all life deals you but you can do it and we are here to help.



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