

## Housing

Housing is recognized as a criteria component of the transition from foster care to independent living.

The South Dakota Department of Social Services' Division of Child Protection Services provides housing assistance to eligible youth who have been in care of the Department in the following areas:

- Assistance to youth with their first apartment by paying the security deposit and first month's rent in full as well as a partial payment of the second and third month's rent.
- Assistance when extra independent living skills are needed to assist youth with a smooth transition to adulthood. The Department contracts with the following programs to provide transitional living services to youth: Stepping Stones, Volunteers of America-Dakotas, McCrossan Boys Ranch and Abbott House-Bridges.

For more information on housing assistance contact the local Community Resource People in your area.

## Community Resource People

### **NORTHERN/CENTRAL REGION**

Agency: Lutheran Social Services  
Phone: 605.229.1500 or 1.800.584.9248  
Cell Phone: 605.380.5488  
Serving: Aberdeen, Huron, Mobridge, Pierre, Sisseton-Wahpeton and Watertown

### **WESTERN REGION**

Agency: Lutheran Social Services  
Phone: 605.348.0477 or 1.800.206.1439  
Serving: Custer, Deadwood, Eagle Butte, Hot Springs, Martin, Mission, Pine Ridge, Rapid City, Belle Fourche, Spearfish, Sturgis and Winner

### **EASTERN REGION**

Agency: Lutheran Social Services  
Phone: 605.221.2346 or 1.888.201.5061  
Serving: Brookings, Chamberlain, Lake Andes, Mitchell, Sioux Falls, Vermillion and Yankton

# Independent Living Program



Provides services for youth in foster care or for youth who have been in foster care in South Dakota

## Contact Us

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## Independent Living Program

In today's world, becoming independent can be a scary process. There are so many resources available that it can be easy to feel confused or overwhelmed. It can even be difficult trying to figure out where to get started. The Independent Living Program provides many services for teens in foster care or for teens who have been in foster care. This brochure explains what is available to help foster youth transition into independent living.



## Conferences & Workshops

### Teen Conference

The Teen Conference is a multi-day event held every other summer to give youth an opportunity to experience and gain knowledge of independent living skills. During the conference, youth stay in a dorm to get a feel for what college might be like. Activities include hands-on skills, completing applications and job interviews, inspirational speakers, workshops and social events.

### Workshops

Workshops are held twice a year across the state to provide teens with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for successful independent living. The one-day workshops are open to teens age 14 to 18. Pre-registration is required.

## Post-Secondary Education & Training

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program provides funding to assist South Dakota foster youth with continued education and training after high school or a GED certificate. ETV funds are financial assistance that can aid youth in reaching their goals and achieving successful independence through education and training. If eligible, a youth in foster care could receive up to \$5,000 a year to attend college or vocational school or to learn a trade.

### Eligibility

Current and former foster youth eligible for Independent Living Program services are eligible for ETV funds. A youth in foster care must have a financial need to receiving funding. To receive ETV funds:

- Must have a high school diploma, GED Certificate of Completion or equivalent.
- Be enrolled in or accepted to a post-secondary or vocational school program.
- If youth are applying for a second time around, they must be making satisfactory progress (minimum of 2.0 GPA) & provide a copy of a transcript verifying their GPA in order to receive continuing assistance.
- A foster youth must have been adopted at age 16 or older, entered kinship guardianship at age 16 or older or was in an out-of-home placement and left foster care at age 18 or older.

### Applying: Required Information

- A one-page essay describing qualifications for a scholarship based on academic performance, financial need and a plan for education.
- A copy of acceptance letter from the college or vocational school.
- A cover letter from the youth's family services specialist or adoptive parent.
- Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), American Collegiate Test (ACT), or Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test scores as required by the school.
- A copy of Free Application for Student Financial Assistance (FAFSA), if appropriate.
- "Cost of Attendance" completed and signed by the financial aid officer.

If approved for ETV funding, youth must re-apply every semester. A requirement is to submit a transcript of the prior semester's grades with a minimum 2.0 grade point average, a letter describing how the money was used and why financial assistance is needed to continue.

## Starter Kit

Teens age 14 to 18 have the chance to earn expense money as they leave foster care. By participating in the Independent Living Program, teens can earn money through incentives and activities such as:

- Attending classes or workshops
- Working with Community Resource People
- Receiving their high school diploma or GED
- Other positive behaviors

When youth leave foster care, the special funds earned are available to help them become independent.

## Youth Organizer

A Youth Organizer has been developed for teens age 14 and older leaving the foster care program. The Youth Organizer is designed to help teens gather the information they need as they move out on their own. It contains 13 sections for keeping a variety of personal information.