

If you are committed to DCF

There are programs that can help you learn to live on your own.

DCF Independent Living Programs include:

Community Life Skills Programs

SWETP (Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program)

CHAP (Community Housing Assistance Program)

and other programs for youth, such as Aftercare.

How do I get into an Independent Living Program?

Your DCF worker has to recommend you. The Independent Living Program has four parts. You may qualify for different parts of the program depending on how old you are.

What is the Community Life Skills Program?

Community Life Skills is offered to DCF youth ages 15 - 21 who are living in an out-of-home placement in the community (except if you are in SWETP or a group home). This program is designed to help you learn important, practical skills that you need to live on your own, such as banking, grocery shopping, and renting an apartment.

What is SWETP?

SWETP is a transitional living apartment program (TLAP). It is available to you if you are 16 or older and your treatment plan goal is not reunification with your parents or transfer of guardianship.

In a transitional living apartment program, you will live in an apartment, usually with a roommate. This apartment is supervised by program staff

who have keys to your apartment and will come into your apartment to check on things. You can have visitors at your apartment, but they have to be on an approved list. The program also has classes to help you learn to manage your apartment and progress toward your goals.

Is SWETP like living at a shelter?

SWETP's transitional apartment programs give you more independence than a shelter. If you want a copy of the rulebook for transitional apartment programs, please ask us.

What is CHAP?

CHAP is a program for youth who have graduated from high school or have a GED, are ready to live on their own, and have completed (or are now in) the life skills program.

In the CHAP program, you can live in an apartment of your own, or you can live with other people. The program gives you some money for rent and to help pay your bills. The amount of money you receive will depend on how much money you make and where you live.

You will be assigned a case manager who will visit you regularly to see how you are managing your money, and to check out your apartment.

You will get a one-time stipend for furniture, household items (pots, pans, towels, a vacuum cleaner), moving expenses and storage. You will also receive payment for college expenses or a vocational training program.

How long can I stay in SWETP or CHAP?

Once you are over 18, you can voluntarily stay with DCF as long as you are in high school, college, or some other educational or vocational training program. You can stay in these Independent Living Programs until you are 21, as long as you follow the rules of the program. In some cases, you can stay in the program until you are 23.

Aftercare and Other Services

There is a network of people in the community to help youth who have completed Independent Living Programs and are now truly on their own. Aftercare is available for 6 months after you are no longer in DCF care, as long as you are under 24. The Aftercare program can help you get records, counseling, or refer you for housing.

What if I don't want to be committed to DCF anymore?

If you are under 18 you cannot sign yourself out of DCF. In order to get out of DCF care, you must ask your lawyer to go to court and file a motion for you, and the judge must give an order to revoke your commitment; or, you must be emancipated.

Six months before your anticipated discharge from DCF care, there must be a conference to finalize a discharge plan for you.

If you are over 18 you can sign yourself out of DCF, but you should NEVER do this without talking to your lawyer first. If you sign out of DCF, you can lose the opportunity to have DCF help pay for an apartment, your living expenses, and college or vocational training.

Before you are signed out of DCF care, DCF must have a discharge meeting with you. You may still be eligible for medical help until you are 21. Please ask us if you have questions.

Can I be in DCF care if I am married or in the military?

If you are married or on active duty in the military, DCF will ask a court to emancipate you.

If I have a baby, does my baby have to be committed to DCF to live with me?

Your baby does not have to be committed to DCF in order to live with you in an Independent Living Program or any other DCF placement. If the Department of Social Services does not help you pay for child care while you are in independent living, DCF will help you pay for child care while you work or go to school.

Can I get help paying for college?

DCF will help you pay for college if you are committed to DCF at the time you turn 18. You will have to sign a voluntary agreement to stay with DCF through college, apply for scholarships, contribute \$500 per year, and be in school full time.

Can I get my driver's license?

You can get your driver's license if you and your worker decide you are ready to learn to drive. DCF will pay 50% of the cost of the driver's education program for the first course.

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Do I have a right to money from DCF for high school activities like the prom, class ring and graduation?

DCF must give you 50% of expenses (up to \$500) in your junior/senior year, to pay for the following:

- yearbook
- yearbook pictures
- prom expenses (tuxedo or dress, tickets, pictures, flowers, transportation)
- junior/senior class dues
- class ring
- class trip(s)
- graduation cap and gown

Other school-sponsored activities may also be covered on a case-by-case basis. Ask your DCF worker about this.

If you are turned down for any funds, you have a right to an administrative hearing. Ask your lawyer about this.



DCF Youth: What you need to know about DCF's Independent Living Programs

Where can I get help?

If you have questions about Independent Living Programs and about your legal rights,
Call CCA's Teen Legal Clinic at 860-570-5327.



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What are
my rights
as a Teen
in DCF
care?