

Ten Things to Remember When You Are Leaving Foster Care

On October 7, 2008, President Bush signed the “Fostering Connections to Success” Act, H.R. 6893 (now P.L. 110-351), into law. States now have the opportunity to obtain federal funds to support youth in foster care beyond age 18. The Bar-Youth Empowerment Project works to identify bills that would extend support for foster youth and also provide information on education, care beyond age 18, court process and youth engagement. The following top ten list was generated by the Bar-Youth Empowerment Project. They encourage youth to find out more about each of these issues and opportunities from their case manager, Transition Specialist, lawyer, Guardian ad Litem and/or CASA.

1. You may be able to keep your court case open or stay in foster care after age 18.
2. You have a right to review and access your case records and they may be useful to you when you leave foster care.
3. You should get important documents from your case worker before you leave care, such as your immunization (shots) records, school records, birth certificate, social security card and medical insurance cards.
4. You should get a driver’s license or state identification card and register to vote before or when you leave foster care.
5. You may be eligible for scholarships to go to college, community college or a vocational school.
6. You may be eligible to attend job training programs for free or at a reduced fee that would help you learn a skill and find a job.
7. You may be able to access services in your community that can help you find a place to live and help with your initial or ongoing rent payments.
8. You may be eligible to receive money from the government to help make ends meet or to buy food.
9. You should open a bank account to keep your money in a safe place and begin to save money for future expenses.
10. You are not alone in this process. Moving out on your own can be hard and there are community programs in your area that can help and there may be other youth-run organizations in your area that your can call.