

ELIGIBILITY

Young adults who were in foster care upon their 18th birthday may continue to receive foster care benefits and services up to 21 years of age as long as one of the following criteria is met on an ongoing basis (N.C.G.S. §108A-48(c)):

Completing high school or a program leading to an equivalent credential; or

Enrolled in an institution that provides postsecondary or vocational education; or

Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment; or

Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or

Incapable of completing the educational or employment requirements due to a medical condition or a disability.

The young adult must also:

Have been in foster care upon his/her 18th birthday; and

Be 18 years of age, but not yet 21 years of age;

Enter into a Voluntary Placement Agreement with a county child welfare agency and agree to abide by the provisions of the agreement; and

Agree to reside in an approved placement.

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Young adults who initially choose to opt out of foster care upon attaining 18 years of age may choose to receive Foster Care 18 to 21 services at a later date as long as they have not reached their 21st birthday, and they meet at least one of the program eligibility requirements listed above.

Once program eligibility conditions have been established, the county child welfare agency is responsible for working in partnership with the young adult to ensure the young adult continues to meet the eligibility requirements on an ongoing basis. This is done through monthly contacts with the young adult. In addition, young adults must immediately contact the county child welfare agency concerning any changes that would affect their eligibility such as the loss of a job, withdrawal from school, or completion of a program.

CONTACT

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18^{TO} 21

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY



WHAT IS 18 TO 21?

Foster Care 18 to 21 is a program that offers young adults opportunities to continue foster care placement and transition to independence with county child welfare agency supervision. There are some young adults who may not be ready to exit foster care upon turning 18 years of age, and may choose to stay in Foster Care 18 to 21 as long as certain requirements are met. Young adults who exit foster care at age 18 are also able to return to the Foster Care 18 to 21 program at a later date as long as they have not reached their 21st birthday.

County child welfare agencies are responsible for providing eligible young adults who enter into an agreement for Foster Care 18 to 21 services with ongoing efforts to help prepare and ensure the young adult's successful transition into adulthood. This policy defines the legal basis for providing foster care benefits and services to young adults, as well as eligibility requirements, development of the Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA), county oversight, required court hearings, and placement options for young adults receiving services.

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18 to 21 services include:

- Assisting with foster care maintenance payments (\$634/month) to help with rent and other utility bills
- Assist in development and implementation of a transitional living plan to meet goals driven by the young adult
- Ongoing monthly support and advocacy to assist with independent living skills, employment and educational goals
- Housing search and transportation assistance
- Referral to community helping agencies
- Help accessing LINKS services

All services and funding must meet one of the following outcomes:

- 1 Economic self-sufficiency
- 2 Safe and Stable Housing
- 3 Academic/Vocational Preparation
- 4 Avoidance of High Risk Behaviors
- 5 Building a personal support network
- 6 Postpone Parenthood
- 7 Access to Health Care

WHAT IS LINKS?

The purpose of LINKS is to build a network of relevant services with youth so that they will have ongoing connections with family, friends, mentors, the community,

employment, education, financial assistance, skills training, and other resources to facilitate the transition to adulthood.

LINKS services can assist with learning about accessing funding to college and post-secondary education, purchasing a car, maintaining car insurance, accessing Medicaid funded health care and much more.

Any young person who aged out of foster care or left foster care after the age of 13 may be eligible for LINKS services.

PROGRAMMING

Every County runs their 18 to 21 program differently. Buncombe County requires you meet monthly with your social worker, participate in team meetings quarterly, complete the Casey Assessment biannually and participate in one court date to be accepted into the program by the court system.

Multiple training opportunities are offered throughout the year. These trainings include; Financial Literacy and Money Management, Networking, and Career Readiness. The programming is driven by the needs and interest of the current participants.

ECHO is a monthly group that meets the first Thursday of every month from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. This group allows young adults to participate in social and educational activities with other current and former foster youth directed at achieving 1 or more of the 7 LINKS outcomes.