

Promote a successful transition to adulthood when youth age out of foster care.

Background: When children and youth enter the foster care system, the state must prioritize their safety and healing from their trauma along with normalcy. Texas Family Code Section 264.001(1) defines “age-appropriate normalcy activity” as an activity or experience that is generally accepted as suitable for a child’s age or level of maturity or that is determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for the age or age group; and in which a child who is not in the conservatorship of the state is generally allowed to participate including extracurricular activities, in-school and out-of-school social activities, cultural and enrichment activities, and employment opportunities. If youth in foster care do not find permanency, i.e., are not reunited with their families or adopted, the state must ensure they are prepared for adulthood as they exit care. Youth aging out of foster care need the same support and life skills training other youth transitioning to adulthood receive from their parents.

Preparation for Adult Living: To provide much of the support young people aging out of foster care need to thrive, the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) contracts with organizations in each region to provide Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes and transitional living services. These services are in the state budget as “PAL purchased client services.” PAL providers teach youth the basic skills needed for living on their own – such as cleaning, laundry, financial management, nutrition, and navigating health care – and connect youth to housing, higher education, and workforce options. PAL-purchased client services are funded through a 1:4 state-to-federal match.

However, contracted PAL providers experienced unexpected cuts to their contracts—up to 26%—a few years ago (starting in FY20-21), due to changes in the funding match. Despite these drastic cuts, providers are still expected to provide services to all youth and young adults referred to them by DFPS. Faced with increasing costs for providing services and cuts in funding, many providers have had to cut back the support, learning opportunities and purchases that provide normalcy to youth in care.

Providers have had to cut back on critical supports for youth transitioning to adulthood, including reducing case management and hands-on learning activities, as well as activities and purchases that promote normalcy such as purchasing graduation cap and gowns, prom expenses, computers to go to college, phones in order to stay connected, and rental assistance to youth.

TNOYS Recommendation:

Restore funding for Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) and Transitional Living Services contracts that provide transitional services to youth.

Snapshot:

- There were over 8,000 Texas youth currently eligible for Preparation for Adult Living in fiscal year 2024.¹
- Every year, 700 – 900 Texas youth in foster care turn 18 and “age out” of eligibility to receive foster care services unless they choose to stay in extended foster care.²
- Young people with a history of foster care, on average, experience longer durations of homelessness compared to their peers without foster care history.³

Transitional Programs:

Supervised Independent Living (SIL) is a type of voluntary Extended Foster Care placement where young adults can live on their own under a supervised independent living setting. A young adult in SIL still receives case management and support services provided by a DFPS contracted provider to help them become independent and self-sufficient. A young adult in SIL will receive help with transitioning to independent living through:

- Achieving identified education and employment goals.
- Accessing community resources.
- Engaging in needed life skills training.
- Establishing important relationships.

Transitional Living Programs (TLP) intend to provide a temporary safety net and an emotional support system for young people experiencing homelessness to transition to self sufficient living. TLPs can include group homes, maternity group homes, host family homes, and Supervised apartments.

TNOYS Recommendation:

Increase rates for SIL and TLP placements to ensure proper supportive housing is available for youth transitioning out of foster care.

¹Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Data Book. CPS Youth in Conservatorship: Preparation for Adult Living (PAL). Access 01/31/2025.
https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Child_Protective_Services/Youth_in_Substitute_Care/Preparation_for_Adult_Living.asp

² Data Book. 2020.

³ Bender et al. Experiences and needs of homeless youth with a history of foster care. Children and Youth Services Review. 2015.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740915001905>.

⁴ DFPS. Supervised Independent Living. Accessed 01/31/2025.

https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/Extended_Foster_Care/supervised_independent_living.asp#:~:text=Step%206:%20Upon%20initial%20acceptance,on%20requesting%20a%20SIL%20placement.