# Ready By 21 Benchmarks

## Achieving Permanency Through Service Planning

- The foster care system does not last forever. Foster Care System provides services to help youth create permanency so that you can thrive in the community once you leave foster care.
- In order to do this, you must have a plan. Use the **Maryland Youth Transitional Plan** to create goals for yourself and design steps towards accomplishing your goals. This plan will be used throughout your involvement in foster care to ensure that you will successfully transition out of foster care. Work with your caseworker to complete your plan.
- To check out the **Maryland Youth Transitional Plan**, go to **MDConnectMYLIFE.org** or ask your case worker.
- If you're having trouble creating goals for your plan, use these **Ready By 21 Benchmarks** to help you. The **Ready By 21 Benchmarks** are designed for youth 14-21 to guide you successfully through foster care (See Below). *If you have any questions about these benchmarks, please talk to your case worker or Independent Living Coordinator.*

# Age 14

### Education: You Should...

- Begin participating in Life Skills Classes.
- Start getting your community service hours towards graduating high school.
- Make sure you know your school's graduation requirements.

### Employment: You Should...

- Get a work permit (you may need it to participate in summer employment programs).
- Start exploring various career interests.

### Health: You Should...

- Attend Life Skills Classes and Workshops on healthy relationships, practicing safe sex, forms of birth control, and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and infections.
- Understand the causes and effects of drugs and alcohol use.
- Understand the importance of preventive and routine health care.
- Understand the importance of medication and how to use medication properly.
- Understand your medical or mental health condition(s) (if applicable).
- Identify all of your medical providers (i.e. primary doctor, dentist, mental health).

### Housing: You Should...

- Live in an approved safe placement with a caring adult.

### Financial Literacy/ Resources: You Should

- Have a bank account (saving and/or checking).
- Check your credit report every year.
- Understand basic money management skills.

### Family and Friends Support: You Should...

- Understand positive and safe relationships.
- Create a photo or scrap book of yourself.
- Create a family tree diagram.

# Age 15-16

### Education: You Should...

- Have a plan detailing how you're going to complete high school or obtain your GED.
- Participate in tutoring services (if necessary).
- Take a college tour or participate in a vocational/trade training program or school.
- Know what is required to be admitted into a college or vocational program or school.
- Participate in a Driver's Education School (if applicable).
- Obtain your Learner's Permit and/or Maryland State Identification Card.

### Employment: You Should...

- Receive assistance to explore your career interest in order to understand what skills or trainings are required in the field of interest.
- Understand the minimum wage.
- Know how to use public transit to get to and from work.
- Know what jobs are available right now for you to apply to.
- Explore summer youth employment programs.
- Engage in some type of work experience (i.e. job shadowing, volunteer activities, and/or summer employment).
- Understand appropriate attire for job interviews and work dress code.

### Health: You Should...

- Understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- Know your family medical history and your medical condition.
- Understand the importance of maintaining your medical records and documentation.
- Practice safe and healthy relationships.

### Housing: You Should...

- Learn how to go grocery shopping, prepare and make simple meals, and safely store food.
- Know what is essential to cleaning a home and maintaining it.
- Understand how to purchase important hygiene products.
- Be able to clean clothes and properly care for them (folding your clothes, putting clothes away in proper place, and ironing).

### Financial Literacy/ Resources: You Should...

- Understand the importance of saving.
- Safely and effectively manage your money.
- Understand basic financial skills.
- Have a budget clothing allowance.

### Family and Friends Support: You Should...

- Be able to identify important and supportive adults.
- Understand the importance of developing life-long relationships.
- Practice healthy relations with others.
- Use protective measures to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and/or infections.

Maryland Department of Human Resources
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MDConnectMYLIFE.org
www.dhr.maryland.gov

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# Age 17-18

### Education: You Should...

The education component of the permanency service planning requires that youth between the ages of 17-18 obtain the appropriate credentials and complete the following task:

- Have a plan for post-secondary education included in your transitional plan.
- Complete Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Enroll in college or a vocational program.
- Understand service needs and know where to access services.
- Register to vote and understand the voting process.

### Employment: You Should...

- Have a completed resume.
- Have an understanding of the job market and employment opportunities that you qualify for.
- Have at least two summer jobs by age 18.
- Have assistance enrolling in occupational training.

### Health: You Should...

- Understand the importance of medication compliance once you leave care.
- Be comfortable asking your doctor questions about your medical conditions.
- Understand the importance of medical insurance.
- Be able to identify and utilize healthcare resources.

### Housing: You Should...

- Know where you are going to live when you leave foster care.
- Understand your rights as a tenant.
- Posses life skills that will allow you to maintain an apartment and make good decisions.

### Financial Literacy/Resources: You Should...

- Posses basic knowledge of entitlement programs and apply for programs to receive services.
- Obtain a copy of your credit report.
- Understand the benefits of staying in care to the age of 21.
- Obtain original or a copy of your birth certificate and social security card.

### Family and Friends Support: You Should...

- Reinforce your family and friend network.

# Age 19-21

### Education: You Should...

- Have access to post-secondary education supportive services.

### Employment: You Should...

- Maintain employment.
- Understand unfair job practices.
- Have assistance enrolling in occupational training.

### Health: You Should...

- Understand how to obtain medical services.
- Be aware of health care coverage options.
- Have a copy of medical records and bills prior to leaving care.

### Housing: You Should...

- Be prepared for a Semi Independent Living Arrangement (SILA) or Independent Living Apartment Program.
- Have a budget plan to maintain your household.
- Know any housing resources available to you.

### Financial Literacy/ Resources: You Should...

- Understand the importance of financial investments.
- Maintain a savings account.
- Be able to budget finances to sustain yourselves.

### Family and Friends Support: You Should...

- Learn how to positively develop relationships with family.

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