

Independent Living Services



Helping OCS Foster Youth
Transition To Adulthood

It All Started Back in the 90's...

• The Federal Government started looking at youth aging out of foster care and they found:



▶ Youth aging out of foster care had:

- Higher rates of arrest and incarceration
- An increased likelihood of early parenting and instability in relationships, including divorce
- Lower high school graduation rates and generally lower school performance
- An increased likelihood to experience homelessness
- A higher rate of substance abuse
- A higher rate of unemployment
- An increased likelihood to experience mental health disorders

The years from birth to adulthood are roughly only one fourth of someone's life. The remaining 75% of anyone's life is a significant time to have a

family - or not have a family.

Aging out



Freedom

Why Do Our Youth Struggle?

- Youth placed in foster care often have difficulty transitioning to adulthood because many of them have lacked a stable, safe, and nurturing family environment that enables young people to grow into healthy adults. These youth face living on their own without family or financial support.



Hope For A Brighter Future!

Federal Government realized that CPS agencies were not making out to be good parents and they were not raising children well!

The **Child Welfare Reform Act** Passed in 1999 and had 5 key points:

1. Identify youth who are likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and help these youth transition into self-sufficiency.
 2. Help youth receive education, training, and services to obtain employment.
 3. Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and education institutions.
 4. Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentors and promotion of interactions with dedicated adults
 5. Provide financial, housing, employment, education counseling and other appropriate services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age.
- Independent Living Services are designed to improve the stability of foster youth as they age out of foster care by offering planning and supportive services and financial support.

Eligible youth

- ▶ Are at least 16 years old
- ▶ Are in out of home placement in OCS custody
- ▶ Adopted youth with finalized adoption on or after 16th birthday
- ▶ Legal Guardianship finalized on or after their 16th birthday.
- ▶ Reunified with parents after age 16



Alaska's IL services positions are broken down into 5 regions: Fairbanks, Western, Southcentral, Anchorage, and Southeast. With an additional State Coordinator position in State Office

Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) have two case loads:

Based on IL Eligibility:

-In-Custody Youth:
Youth who are age 16 or older, in OCS custody, and in an out of home placement.

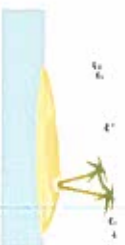
-Out-of-Custody Youth:
Youth/Young Adults who are no longer in OCS custody, but were in OCS custody at age 16 or older and were in an out of home placement

RILS Role for In-Custody Youth

- Act as an advocate for the youth.
- Participate in all the administrative reviews.
- Help assure that youth have completed their Casey Life Skills Assessment and enter the data into ORCA.
- Organize and facilitate Transition and Exit Plan Meetings.
- Manage regional Independent Living funds and initiate IL request for funds.
- Organize and provide life skills training to our youth through our correspondence CD ROMs, videos, worksheets, classes, and conferences.
- Will act as your and the youth's resource providing resources and referrals as needed.
- Recruit youth for and participate in the Facing Foster Care in Alaska retreats and meetings.

Permanency matters

- If young people are going to be successful in getting and keeping a job, caring for their environment and the rest; they need to be supported in a stable permanent placement by lifelong connections with caring people. Independent living without the rest is like teaching someone to swim and then tossing them out of the boat with no land in sight.
Paul C. AK former foster youth




Concurrent Planning






NOT an either/or proposition!


Planning with determination



APPLIA

1. **Establishment:** The Agency requires (1) specific goals
 1. The agreement may determine to the state whether permanent living agreement will be available to a state custody caregiver.
 2. The state is a party to the agreement.
 3. The agreement is irrevocable, unless otherwise stated by the agreement.
 4. The agreement, after meeting conditions, requires that guidelines of permanent placement with a caregiver remain, determine that there is a custody transfer and that the child's permanent placement is with the caregiver.
 5. The agreement is subject to the state's approval of the agreement.
2. **Adoption process:** permanent living agreement must be approved by the state.
 1. The agreement must be approved by the state.
 2. The agreement must be approved by the state.
 3. The agreement must be approved by the state.
 4. The agreement must be approved by the state.
 5. The agreement must be approved by the state.
3. **Temporary custody:** The state may require the caregiver to maintain
 1. The caregiver must have a sufficient fund that the state is able to fund the child because of an agreement of permanent placement and the caregiver's ability to maintain the child.
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Reality




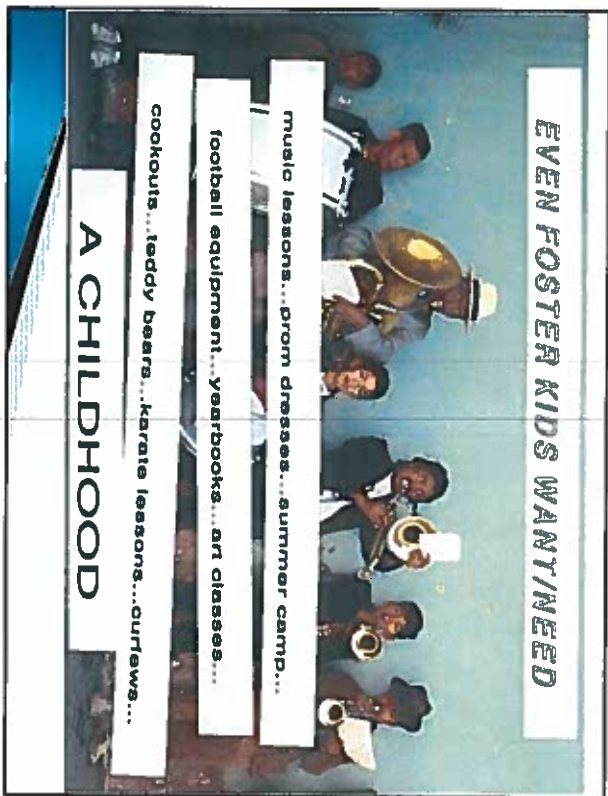
NO FAMILY
NO SAFETY
NO STABILITY
LONELY
SCARED
SAD

Loneliness

LONELINESS 1 in 4, The severity of loneliness upsurges

Category	Percentage
Living with a partner	9%
Orally	26%
Ex-couples (sexual intercourse)	38%
Loneliness	45%



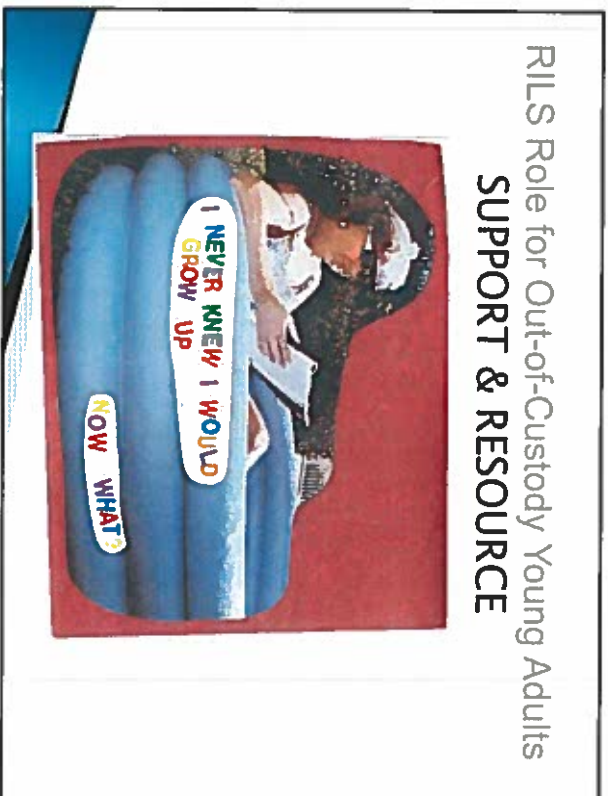


EVEN FOSTER KIDS WANT/NEED

- music lessons...prom dresses...summer camp...
- football equipment...yearbooks...art classes...
- cookouts...teddy bears...karate lessons...ourfaws...

A CHILDHOOD

RILS Role for Out-of-Custody Young Adults
SUPPORT & RESOURCE



**I NEVER KNEW I WOULD
GROW UP
NOW WHAT?**



Show Me The Money!

\$ Independent Living Funds \$

OCS Independent Living Services offers financial assistance to eligible youth in three different areas:

- \$ In-Custody Funds**
- \$ Out-of-Custody Funds**
- \$ Education and Training Voucher Funds**

As well as we maintain the University of Alaska Foster Youth Presidential Tuition Waiver Scholarship.

What are Independent Living Funds?

Independent Living funds can be a resource to IL eligible youth to help support them in their transition from foster care to adulthood.

Funds are used to help support youth in (but not limited to):

- Education
- Employment
- Life Skills Development
- Extra Curricular Activities
- Cultural Activities



Additional funds for out of custody youth can be used for: Housing, Basic Living Needs, Transportation, Emergency Assistance

And There Are Always...

Other Duties As Assigned:

- ▶ RILS are primary case workers for all re-entry youth
- ▶ RILS are assigned to any tribal custody youth that are eligible and request services
- ▶ RILS work with TBRA Youth
- ▶ RILS assist in making referrals to SYNC
- ▶ RILS conduct and monitor the NYTD surveys
- ▶ ORCA data entry



Facing Foster Care in Alaska



- RILS are allies working together with FFCFA to give youth a voice
- IL funds pay for lodging and meals at FFCFA retreats 4 times per year
- At least one ILS worker attends weekend retreats to provide support
- IL funds for youth speaking on panels
- IL funds provide lunch/meals for youth participating in community trainings



Thanks To FFCA

Youth Voice:



- ▶ Youth can stay in custody longer, until age 21
- ▶ Eligible youth can re-enter custody if they need additional support after leaving care
- ▶ IL services received two additional RILS positions, additional funding for housing and additional funding for education
- ▶ Youth can participate in Foster Wear and get discounts at participating stores statewide
- ▶ Eligible youth can get braces through Medicaid



Tips For Working With Youth:

- ▶ Listen!
- ▶ Be Honest
- ▶ Ask for their opinion
- ▶ Encourage them to be involved in their plan and their case
- ▶ Take time to build a relationship with the youth
- ▶ Consider texting
- ▶ Incentives work!
- ▶ Be forgiving
- ▶ Communicate often, let them know what's going on in the case
- ▶ Do what you say you are going to do, and fess up when you haven't been able to get to something yet.



Explore The Culture Of Foster Care:

I want to pills of TLC

FOSTER CARE ALUMNI of America

My sister was my family. I love everyone else, but I love her.

Connecting Today... Transforming Tomorrow

www.fostercarealumni.org

113 S. Boyd Street, Tallahassee, AL 32311
Phone: 904.299.6167 Fax: 904.299.6167


Chen's Story
Chen's story is a testament to the power of foster care. She was placed in foster care at a young age and grew up in a loving family. She is now a successful professional and is grateful for the support she received during her time in foster care.

John & Ferguson
John & Ferguson are a foster family who have provided a loving home for several children. They are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all the children in their care.

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Email: admin@FosterCareAlumni.org

Do You Know What the #1 predictor of youth success is after they age out of custody?



Permanency: A Youth's Perspective

- o Permanency is a state of mind, not a placement
- o Someone who will miss you when you don't show up
- o Someone to trust long-term w/ it out a doubt
- o finding someone that cares about you that will give you a chance
- o Someone you can always talk to no matter what and no judge you

Youth's perspective

OCS VS Independent Living

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Safety▶ Well being▶ Permanency▶ Here and now	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Education - meeting milestone of HS diploma or GED▶ Employment - training and skills to sustain employment▶ Training - job tract, short term secondary - ed leading to employment, college tract▶ Permanency - mentorship - new grant promoting permanency▶ IL Activities promoting self sufficiency▶ Milestones - permit, license, driving school, AK ID - Involive the RILS before making promises
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OCS - primary casework

ILS - secondary casework

▶ **The impossible can ALWAYS be broken down into possibilities**

- Reunification
- Fit and willing relative
- Adoption
- Guardianship

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