Aftercare Eligibility Expanded - Thousands Can Benefit

Senate Bill 564 (2024) Made the Biggest Revision to Independent Living Statutes Since the Creation of Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Extended Foster Care.

WHAT IS AFTERCARE?

Aftercare is services and financial support for young adults who were previously in the foster care system. The Aftercare Law is Florida Statute §409.1451(3)A.

AFTERCARE SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Mentoring or tutoring
- Mental Health Services
- Substance abuse counseling
- Life skills classes
- Parenting classes
- Job and Career skills training
- Counselor consultations
- Temporary financial assistance
- Financial literacy skills training
- Daycare referrals
- Educational extracurricular activities
- Emergency financial assistance to overcome barriers to self-sufficiency

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR AFTERCARE?

Young adults who were previously in the foster care system if they are now between the ages of 18 and 23.

AND

Were placed by the dependency court into out of home care for 6 months or more, after they turned age 14 and either:

- Aged out when they were still in out of home care,
- Were adopted,
- Were placed into guardianship, or
- Were emancipated by a court prior to turning age 18.

Out of home care includes youth placed in foster care and those placed with relatives or non-relatives, whether or not they obtained a foster parent license.

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WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR AFTERCARE?

- Young adults who were previously in the foster care system and were reunified with their parents prior to age 18.
- Young adults who were in the foster care system, but left it before age 14, or without spending 6 months in out of home care after age 14.

WHAT CHANGED WITH THE NEW LAW?

- Young adults who were placed with relatives, non-relatives, adopted, put into guardianship and emancipated are all newly eligible for Aftercare.
    - Previously, the only young adults who could get Aftercare were those living in licensed foster care when they turned age 18 and were not in Extended Foster Care.
- In the event of a state or national emergency (like COVID-19) DCF will be able to provide emergency funding to any young adult that the funding covers.
    - Previously, it was limited to helping young people that were in extended foster care, or were eligible for PESS or after care.

HOW DO I ACCESS AFTERCARE?

- Contact the Independent Living Staff for the Community Based Care Agency where you live. Use this list of Independent Living Contacts to find the right person.
- You will have to fill out an Application for Aftercare Services
- Independent Living staff will help you create an Aftercare Plan that discusses how much assistance you need, the specific reason you need it, and describes the activities you will do to achieve self-sufficiency.

The Administrative Rule for Aftercare is 65C-42.003 forms the basis for the answers in this next section of questions:

DOES DCF (OR COMMUNITY BASED CARE LEAD AGENCY OR INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM) HAVE TO PROVIDE ME WITH THE SERVICES I ASK FOR?

- The Independent Living program does not have to provide you everything you ask for. Their staff will assess your needs when you first ask for help and will reassess every three months.
- The Independent Living program does not have to directly provide you with services. Instead, it can help you get services offered by others in your community.

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HOW FAST DO THEY HAVE TO RESPOND TO MY REQUEST?

- The Independent Living program has 10 business days to let you know what they decide about your request.
- If they deny your request, they have to give you information telling you how you can appeal the decision.
- They should also tell you about other benefits you might be eligible for, like Extended Foster Care and Postsecondary Educational Services and Supports.

WHAT IF I AM ABOUT TO BE HOMELESS?

- You can ask for help to avoid homelessness without filing a complete application.
- The Independent Living staff is supposed to provide services "as expeditiously as possible" which means less than 24 hours.

CAN I GET THE MONEY SO I CAN PAY MY OWN BILLS?

- If you get cash assistance, the Independent Living staff is supposed to provide the money directly to the vendors (landlord, utility company) until they determine that you can successfully manage the full amount of the money.

You will need to provide documents to support a request for financial assistance.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I MOVE TO ANOTHER PART OF THE STATE?

- You can get Aftercare assistance in any part of the state. Contact the Independent Living staff at the Community Based Care Lead Agency where you are currently living for help.

WHO CAN HELP ME WITH GETTING AFTERCARE?

- Any of your adult supporters can help you. Check in with your Guardian ad ad Litem or Attorney to see if they can help. You can also contact Florida's Children First at FCF@FloridasChildrenFirst.org with questions.

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