

A Step-By-Step Guide for Transition Aged Youth and Young Adults for Exploring and Applying for Housing in Texas



Transition aged youth and young adults are encouraged to prepare and plan for housing as early as possible. Finding the right place to live (location), exploring housing options and rental assistance programs, determining eligibility, obtaining documentation, completing the applications, and securing housing takes effort and time. This step-by-step housing guide was created to support you on your journey to independence.

This guide discusses how to:

1. [Get Connected!](#)
2. [Explore Location\(s\)](#)
3. [Get Real! Assess Housing Readiness](#)
4. [Get Real. Develop a Housing Plan](#)
5. [Applying for In-Care and Out-of-Care Housing Options](#)

1. Get Connected!

It is important for transition aged youth to discuss all options and programs with caseworkers, their local [housing liaison](#), circle of support teams, and PAL staff as soon as possible. [Learn more about Preparing for Adult Living \(PAL\) Program](#). Your PAL workers can also connect you with [Transition Centers](#) that provide additional services and resources related to housing, education, and employment. DFPS also has an Employment Program Specialist. When in doubt, reach out to the regional housing liaisons and they can help connect you to the right people and explain your options and next steps.

2. Explore Location(s)

Location is important. Once youth know where they want to live, learning about available housing options, rental assistance programs, and wrap-around support in that area can be explored. Some areas offer a lot of resources and others do not, so young adults may need to be

prepared and open to choosing another location that might offer the support and assistance needed to secure a home. Youth can prepare for housing by assessing housing readiness, creating a Housing Plan by age 17, and reviewing the plan often as part of service planning, circle of support meetings, and transitional planning.

One helpful resource for exploring location is the [Affordable Housing Search Engine](#), where you can enter search criteria and find vacancies throughout the state of Texas. Another resource for finding affordable housing units, locating Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Public Housing Authorities offices, and finding homeless resources is the [HUD Resource Locator](#).

3. Get Real! Assess Housing Readiness

Once transition aged youth leave foster care, they will need a place to live. When youth transition to adulthood, some financial assistance may be available to help them with starting out on their own. However, the financial assistance may not last long, and it will not cover all bills, so young adults will need to have a job or college financial assistance (in most cases). Your caseworker or PAL worker can discuss your individual needs and desires with you to help you determine what is in your best interest and create a plan for successful transition into independent living.

For more information, see the [Housing Readiness Handout](#) and the [Guide to Aging Out in Texas](#).

In assessing housing readiness, the following items should be discussed:

Independent Living Skills Evaluation

- Are you able to live independently, or do you need additional support?
- Can you work, or are you eligible for SSI benefits?
- Can you cook, clean, and pay basic bills like rent, food, utilities, and transportation?
- Can you pay for incidentals like recreational activities, movies, and hobbies?

Housing Considerations

Preferences and logistics:

- Where do you want to live? Location is important.
- What housing options are you eligible for in this location?
- What properties are available?
- What is the application process for the places you are considering?
- How do you pay for your portion of rent and utilities?

Understanding housing terminology:

- What is a lease?
- What is a property manager, and how do you work with them?
- What are lease violations, and how do you resolve them?
- What is an inspection?
- What are your rights?
- What is Fair Housing?
- How do you terminate or renew a lease?

Rental Assistance Program Screening

- Choose a location. Where do you want to live?
- Review support and rental assistance housing program options in this area.
- Determine eligibility.
- If eligible, complete applications. If not eligible, what else is available?
- Obtain required documentation.
- Is there a waitlist? Sign up for all waitlists.
- What is your plan if there is a waitlist or are delays?

After a transition aged youth has assessed housing readiness, identified a location, explored housing availability and rental assistance options, and determined eligibility, everything should be organized in their Housing Plan. The plan should be completed by 17 years of age.

4. Get Real. Develop a Housing Plan

The [Housing Plan](#) should be a top priority. It can be completed at any time but should be completed by 17 years of age. The Housing Plan should assess independent living skills, describe youth preferences (location, housing goals), and identify housing availability and rental assistance program options. It should also include obtaining the required documentation and plan for applying to eligible programs. In most cases, youth can apply to these programs up to 90 days prior to turning 18 years of age.

The Housing Plan should include strategies for dealing with delays and waitlists and a backup plan to prevent homelessness should assistance be denied. The waitlists could include public housing authorities with high demand for assistance and apartments with no or limited vacancies. Your individualized housing plan is your roadmap for successful transition from foster care to independent living.

Reference: [Housing Plan Template](#)

5. Applying for In-Care and Out-of-Care Housing Options

The following In-Care Options are available for consideration.

- Extended Foster Care
- Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Programs
- Transitional Living Programs (TLP)

The following Out-of-Care Options are available for consideration. There are three youth-targeted rental assistance programs:

- Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)
- Family Unification Program (FUP)
- Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Program

To learn more about the In-Care and Out-of-Care options and how to apply visit the [DFPS Housing Program](#) website.