



STATE STATUTES

CURRENT THROUGH OCTOBER 2025

Supports and Services for Expectant and Parenting Youth in Foster Care

To find statute information for a particular State, Territory, or Tribe, go to the [State Statutes Search](#).

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-123) allows States to use funds from title IV-E of the Social Security Act for certain "time-limited" services aimed at preventing the use of foster care in maltreatment cases. Among these services are in-home parent skill-based programs, including parenting skills training and parent education for a youth in foster care who is expecting or parenting his or her own child.¹

¹ 42 USC § 671(e)(1)

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The case plan of a youth who is expecting or parenting a child must include a prevention plan that includes the following:

- A list of the services or programs to be provided to or on behalf of the youth to ensure that the youth is prepared (in the case of a pregnant youth in foster care) or able (in the case of a parenting youth in foster care) to be a parent
- A description of the foster care prevention strategy for any child born to the youth²

This publication provides an overview of the laws and policies that States have developed that specifically address the special needs of youth who are expecting or parenting children while residing in out-of-home care. For a discussion of best practices in meeting the needs of expectant and parenting youth, see the Child Welfare Information Gateway publication, [*Improving Services for Expectant and Parenting Youth in Care*](#).

YOUTH'S PARENTAL RIGHTS

As no State has passed a law restricting the parental rights of minors based solely on their age,³ the right of a youth to parent his or her child is presumed. In approximately⁴ 21 States⁵ and the District of Columbia, the laws

or policies regarding the care of expectant and parenting youth in foster care confirm the right of minor parents of either gender to parent their children and to make decisions regarding the care, custody, and control of the child. Policies in 15 States,⁶ specifically state that agencies must allow the parent to parent his or her child without placing the child in State custody unless there are safety concerns.

In nine States⁷ and the District of Columbia, expectant parents have the right to make decisions regarding their pregnancy, including whether to parent the child or place the child for adoption. In nine States⁸ and the District of Columbia, caregivers and caseworkers are not allowed to take any action to try to influence, pressure, or dictate the expectant parent's decision.

Many States also have specific provisions for including the fathers in the care of their children who were born while their mothers were in foster care. Twenty-two States⁹ confirm that fathers have the same rights as mothers to be involved in decision-making and planning for the child. Fifteen States and the District of Columbia¹⁰ work to support the father's relationship with the child through such measures as arranging visitation. In 11

² 42 USC § 671(e)(2)(ii)

³ L. Pilnik and L. Austen. (2009). Advocacy for young or expectant parents in foster care. *ABA Child Law Practice*, 28(7). https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/center_on_children_and_the_law/parentrepresentation/advocacy_for_young_parents.pdf

⁴ The word "approximately" is used to stress the fact that States frequently amend their laws and applies to all data in this publication. The information in this publication is current only through October 2025.

⁵ Alaska, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin

⁶ Arkansas, Florida, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington

⁷ Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and Wisconsin

⁸ Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin

⁹ Alaska, Florida, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin

¹⁰ Alaska, California, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin

States,¹¹ the child's father can be considered as a placement for the child if the mother is unable or unwilling to provide appropriate care. Seven States¹² will help the father legally establish his paternity, including through paternity testing or by registering with a putative father registry.

OPTIONS FOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Most States have laws or policies for keeping a parenting youth in the same out-of-home setting as his or her child. Twenty-nine States,¹³ the District of Columbia, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians allow a minor parent to live with his or her baby in a foster family home if the foster caregiver has the capacity to provide appropriate care and supervision and there are no safety concerns. To prevent the need to change a youth's living arrangement, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians waive the usual foster home capacity limits so that a minor parent can remain with his or her child in the same foster home.

In approximately 21 States,¹⁴ the agency may place expectant youth in specialized residential facilities or mother-baby group homes where they can provide appropriate

prenatal care and parent preparation. Most of these facilities also offer short-term care for the mother and her infant after the birth. For older parenting youth in foster care, 11 States¹⁵ and the District of Columbia permit the parent to live in supervised independent living arrangements with his or her child.

HEALTH SERVICES

Title IV-B of the Social Security Act requires State child welfare agencies to ensure that all youth living in out-of-home care receive appropriate medical and mental health care, including health screenings that meet reasonable standards of medical practice.¹⁶ For expectant mothers, laws and policies in 27 States¹⁷ and the District of Columbia require that appropriate health care include all necessary prenatal checkups, hospital delivery, and postnatal care. Policies in 13 States¹⁸ and the District of Columbia include pediatric health care for the youth's infant.

PARENT PREPARATION FOR EXPECTANT YOUTH

Under title IV-E, a pregnant or parenting youth in foster care may participate in parent-skills-based programs for up to 12 months, including parenting skills training, parent education, and individual and family

¹¹ Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and Vermont

¹² Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont

¹³ Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

¹⁴ Alaska, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin

¹⁵ Alabama, California, Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin

¹⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 622(b)(15)(A)

¹⁷ Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin

¹⁸ Alaska, California, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia

counseling.¹⁹ State laws and policies provide instruction on the following topics for expectant and parenting youth:

- Parenting skills (in 23 States²⁰ and the District of Columbia)
- Child development (in 14 States²¹ and the District of Columbia)
- Infant care techniques (in 11 States²²)
- Safe sleep practices (in 8 States²³)

Laws and policies in 14 States²⁴ and the District of Columbia offer parenting education to fathers who wish to have a role in raising their children.

EDUCATION AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT PARENTING YOUTH

In 13 States²⁵ and the District of Columbia, the life-skills training that all youth in foster care receive must include further parenting education for any youth who is parenting his or her child. Topics may include child nutrition and health, budgeting and household management, child safety and accident prevention, age-appropriate discipline, and family relationships and coparenting.

In 20 States²⁶ and the District of Columbia, parenting youth are provided with counseling, including counseling related to decision-making, mental health issues, or substance use. Fourteen States²⁷ have programs to ensure that the parenting youth completes high school or engages in vocational training.²⁸

ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORTS

Many States recognize that parenting youth need financial and other practical assistance to meet their children's daily needs. In 16 States²⁹ and the District of Columbia, when the youth's child is living in the custody of the youth (i.e., not in foster care), a supplemental payment is added to the monthly foster care maintenance payment to help meet the needs of the child. In most of these States, the enhanced payment is made to the out-of-home care provider. In three States³⁰ and the District of Columbia, however, a youth participating in an independent living program receives the supplemental payment. In Iowa, \$35 of the payment is designated as an allowance for the parenting youth.

¹⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 671(3)

²⁰ Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia

²¹ Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

²² Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia

²³ Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas

²⁴ Alaska, California, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia

²⁵ Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin

²⁶ California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

²⁷ California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin

²⁸ For more information on this issue, see Child Welfare Information Gateway's [Educational Supports for Youth in Foster Care](#).
²⁹ California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming

³⁰ California, Connecticut, and Virginia

Some States provide or help youth obtain physical items needed to safely care for an infant, including the following:

- Infant sleep equipment, such as a crib or bassinet (in six States³¹ and the District of Columbia)
- Car seats (in five States³²)
- Infant clothing and diapers (in seven States³³ and the District of Columbia)

To ensure that parenting youth can attend school, work, and typical adolescent activities, 24 States³⁴ and the District of Columbia assist youth in accessing suitable child care. In 11 States,³⁵ parenting youth who qualify for independent living programs may receive assistance in securing and maintaining suitable housing.

Recognizing that longterm success in establishing a healthy parent-child relationship can be enhanced by accessing community supports, some States provide the following additional assistance:

- Assistance in applying for Federally funded programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Women, Infants, and Children program (in 14 States³⁶)

- Support obtaining transportation (in 12 States³⁷ and the District of Columbia)
- Help in securing Medicaid coverage for the youth's child (in seven States³⁸)

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR PARENTING YOUTH THAT PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

All youth in foster care receive instruction in developing the skills needed to become self-sufficient adults. Parenting youth often must master adult living skills earlier than their nonparenting peers while simultaneously further developing their parenting skills. Common areas of instruction include the following:

- Budgeting and money management (in 11 States³⁹)
- Daily-living skills (in 14 States⁴⁰)
- Home and child care management (in 12 States⁴¹)

Education and career capacity-building are central to preventing longterm poverty for young parents and creating stable environments for their children. Sixteen States⁴² include job-skills development, career planning, and employment counseling in their policies for parenting youth in foster care.

³¹ California, Delaware, Illinois, New York, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania

³² California, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania

³³ California, Florida, Louisiana, Montana, New Jersey, Ohio, and Oklahoma

³⁴ Alabama, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin

³⁵ California, Illinois, Kansas, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin

³⁶ Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin

³⁷ California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin

³⁸ California, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, Virginia, and Wyoming

³⁹ Alaska, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina

⁴⁰ California, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington

⁴¹ Alabama, Alaska, California, Illinois, Montana, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington

⁴² Alabama, California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, and Washington

To help parenting youth develop emotional resilience and supportive relationships, some States also provide the following services:

- Individual or group counseling (in 15 States⁴³)
- Support for healthy relationships and coparenting (in 9 States⁴⁴)
- Connections to supportive adults and mentors (in 11 States⁴⁵)
- Connections to community services and programs (in 12 States⁴⁶)

FOSTER CARE PREVENTION STRATEGY FOR ANY CHILD BORN TO THE YOUTH

In 16 States,⁴⁷ the overall focus of State policies regarding expectant and parenting youth who choose to parent his or her child is to provide the support and services that stabilize the living situation and prevent the separation of the parent and child. Policies in approximately 11 States⁴⁸ require parenting youth's case plans to explicitly include measures to prevent the need to place the infant in foster care. The approaches used vary from State-to-State but can include the following:

- Designing support plans focused on preserving and strengthening the teen parent family unit (in seven States⁴⁹)

- Including title IV-E prevention services in the case plan (in eight States⁵⁰)
- Developing service plans to help parenting youth acquire skills necessary to safely parent (in 11 States⁵¹)

In addition, 11 States⁵² conduct capacity and responsibility assessments to determine whether the infant can safely remain with the minor parent, while 18 States⁵³ provide inhome safety planning and services.

This publication is a product of the *State Statutes Series* prepared by Child Welfare Information Gateway. While every attempt has been made to be as complete as possible, additional information on these topics may be in other sections of statutes, codes, regulations, agency policies, case law, and informal practices and procedures.

⁴³ Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

⁴⁴ Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Vermont

⁴⁵ California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia

⁴⁶ Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina

⁴⁷ California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington

⁴⁸ Alabama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington

⁴⁹ California, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington

⁵⁰ California, Kansas, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia

⁵¹ Alabama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin

⁵² Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington

⁵³ Alaska, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia

SUGGESTED CITATION

Child Welfare Information Gateway.
(2026). *Supports and services for expectant
and parenting youth in foster care*. U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families,
Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/supports-services-expectant-parenting-youth-foster-care>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau



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