

NEW OPPORTUNITIES *for* YOUTH AGING OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM



When youth in Nebraska's foster care system turn 19, the state stops being their legal guardian and is no longer responsible for their care. Thus, these youth "age out" of foster care and are basically on their own. Sometimes this happens for youth even younger than age 19. There are two new opportunities in Nebraska that may be able to help these vulnerable young people in their transition to independence.

Medicaid Coverage from Ages 19-26

As of January 1, 2014, many youth aging out of foster care are eligible to receive Medicaid coverage until they turn 26 under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).^{*} Young adults who already aged out of foster care and aren't yet 26 years old could also be eligible.

**The ACA is a federal act that was signed into law by President Obama in 2010 to make sure that all Americans are able to have affordable health insurance coverage.*

Services will include:

The full benefits of Medicaid, including:

- Screening, prevention, and early intervention services
- Diagnostic services and treatment for physical and mental health conditions
- Dental and vision care

Youth may be eligible if they:

- Aged out of foster care^{*}
- Were enrolled in Medicaid while in foster care

**NOTE: At this time, Nebraska has decided that young people must have aged out at 19 in order to get this coverage. Thus, youth who exited the foster care system between ages 18 and 19 may not be covered. Contact Nebraska Appleseed's Intake and Information Line at 1-800-845-3746 for more information or if you have questions about this. Youth who exited the system at ages 17 or younger will not be eligible for this category of Medicaid.*

How to apply:

Youth and young adults who may be eligible for this coverage can apply for Medicaid online at <http://www.accessnebraska.ne.gov> (make sure they click "yes" when asked if they want to find out if they can get help paying for health coverage, and make sure they answer the questions about whether they were ever in foster care). They can also contact the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Medicaid Division at 1-855-632-7633, 402-473-7000 (in Lincoln), or 402-595-1178 (in Omaha).

The Bridge to Independence Program

"Bridge to Independence" is a new statewide program in Nebraska that will provide extra services and support for youth who age out of foster care until they turn 21. It will start sometime in 2014.*

**The exact date the program will start is still being determined. Keep checking with Nebraska Appleseed or your local DHHS office for updates.*

Services will include:

For youth who aged out of foster care:

- Medicaid coverage
- Year-round housing support
- Young adult-directed case management services

For youth who were adopted or entered a guardianship at age 16+:

- Extended subsidies and, when possible, extended Medicaid coverage

Youth may be eligible if they:

Are doing at least one of the following:

- Going to school (e.g. high school, GED program, college, vocational education program)
- Working part time (at least 80 hours per month)
- Participating in a work program or activity (e.g. internship, volunteering)
- Unable to do any of those things because of a medical condition

How to apply:

As soon as the program starts, the first step is for youth to sign an agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services to receive services. For details about this, youth can contact their caseworker, their guardian ad litem, their local DHHS office, or Nebraska Appleseed's Intake and Information Line at 1-800-845-3746.

For more information:

- Visit our website at: <http://neappleseed.org/B2I>
- Read our fact sheet about the ACA at: <http://neappleseed.com/downloads668>
- Read about Bridge to Independence at: <http://neappleseed.com/downloads667>
- Contact Nebraska Appleseed directly at 402-438-8853