



Youth Housing Assistance Program

DCFS may provide Youth Housing Assistance to help attain or maintain housing stability for youth that the department currently has or previously had legal responsibility. There are two parts to Youth Housing Assistance: *Housing Advocacy* and *Cash Assistance*, each of which is explained below.

Housing Advocacy

Housing advocacy services assist clients in obtaining and/or maintaining stable housing. Services include:

- Assistance in securing affordable housing
- Consumer education
- Budget counseling
- Linkages to community based resources (i.e. assistance with utilities, clothing and food)
- Follow-up services for a minimum of three months after the client secures appropriate housing

Note: Housing Advocacy does not include any money.

Eligibility:

Youth receiving housing advocacy services must meet all three of the following criteria:

1. Be at least 17 ½ and less than 21 years of age; (Youth referred for a Family Unification Program or Fostering Youth Initiative housing subsidy can receive services after they turn 21.)
2. Be legally the responsibility of DCFS within six months of case closure, **or** have aged out of DCFS care; (Note: Youth that entered adoption or subsidized guardianship after their 14th birthday are also eligible.); **and**
3. Have an income that is sufficient to meet rent and utility costs; **or** be working on obtaining that income. (While housing advocacy can begin before income is in place, it is extremely unlikely that youth will be able to secure housing without sufficient income. Housing advocates can often help with employment.)

Cash Assistance

Assistance will vary depending on a client's situation. Cash assistance may be authorized for the following reasons:

- Housing security deposit
- Rent (limited circumstances)
- Beds for the client and the client's children
- Current utility bills or utility deposits
- Appliances
- Partial housing subsidy for a period of one year following case closure (housing costs must exceed 30% of income and assistance cannot continue past the client's 21st birthday)
- Other items required by the client to avoid or manage a crisis

Eligibility:

Youth receiving Cash Assistance must meet all four of the following criteria:

1. Be at least 18 and less than 21 years of age; (Youth referred for a Family Unification Program or Fostering Youth Initiative housing subsidy can receive services after they turn 21.)
2. Be legally the responsibility of DCFS and ready for case closure **or** have aged out of DCFS care. (Note: Youth that moved to adoption or subsidized guardianship **after age 16 may be** eligible for cash assistance);
3. Have completed a budget statement (Form CFS 370-5C) that demonstrates that with any subsidy and all other income they will be able to cover all remaining living expenses (e.g. housing, utilities, clothing, food); and
4. Need cash assistance in order to attain or maintain stable housing

Referral Process or Questions

For more information, contact
the Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator at 312-328-2159 (Phone) or 312-328-2166 (Fax).



Youth Housing Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Am I entitled to this money?

A. No. This program is based on need, not entitlement.

Q. Will you pay for my housing?

A. No, the idea of housing advocacy is to help you find housing that you can afford. For those eligible for cash assistance, we can also help with certain housing start-up expenses, such as a security deposit.

Q. I need a job. What can I do?

A. Any education and transition coordinator can assist you in attaining employment by referring you to employment and training programs and services.

Q. I was adopted or entered subsidized guardianship. Am I eligible for housing advocacy?

A. Yes, you are eligible for housing advocacy if you were adopted or moved to subsidized guardianship after your 14th birthday. (Note: Housing Advocacy does not entitle you to money.)

Q. I was adopted or entered subsidized guardianship. Am I eligible for cash assistance?

A. Yes, you may be eligible if you were adopted or moved to subsidized guardianship after age 16.

Q. Can my husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend/partner live with me? What about children?

A. If anyone in your household is eligible for services, we can serve your household, however you define it. We will look at your household income to determine if housing you find is affordable for you.

Q. What about roommates?

A. Sometimes having one or more roommates is the best way to make your housing affordable. You may want to consider this option. We will ask some questions about your roommates' income to make sure this housing situation is affordable for all of you.

Q. Do you have an apartment I can move into right now?

A. No, we do not have any apartments. Our housing advocates will provide assistance with finding housing on the open market, anywhere in Illinois.

Q. What if I don't live in Illinois?

A. First, call your local child welfare office (where you are) and ask for Chafee services. Tell them you aged out of the Illinois child welfare system. If you need help accessing these services, call the number below and we will try to help. If you still need help, but can find your own housing and can afford the monthly rent, we may be able to help you by mailing a check for the security deposit to your landlord. Call to see if this is possible.

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