

Need to Know Series:

Check It: Mind, Body and Soul

(Wellness: Nutrition, Health and Fitness)



Youth In Progress

New York State Foster Care
Youth Leadership Advisory Team

“The mission of Youth In Progress is to enhance and advance the lives of today’s and tomorrow’s youth by supporting their sense of self and responsibility. To do this, we pledge to educate everyone involved in the various systems Youth In Progress members represent to the realities of this experience.”

www.youthinprogress.org

In the process of achieving self-sufficiency, you will need to learn how to care for and maintain a healthy balance in your life. Also, learning how to access services in your community that support this process is important. Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of— and making choices for— a healthier lifestyle.



Why it is important:

Learning to make healthy choices and strive for balance helps to keep you on the path to achieving your goals. While you are in care and when you transition to adulthood, it is important to utilize the resources and supports that can help you stay healthy.



How do I achieve wellness?

Every youth in care, 14 years of age and older, needs to have a life skills plan with goals. Those goals should each include elements of wellness. Talk to your worker about the areas you would like more information on or assistance with.



Some areas of wellness:

Activity and Fitness: appropriate amounts of physical activity for development and maintenance of good physical condition

Nutrition: opportunities for a balanced diet and making wise food choices

Medical: regular self-tests and checkups, proper use of medications, and access to medical care

Environment: safety in the home and in your community

Emotional: viewing difficult situations as challenges and opportunities for growth and adopting a positive attitude; also, being able to express emotions appropriately

“Wellness doesn’t just affect my health, it affects every part of my life. Choosing wellness makes me feel better about myself; when I feel better about myself I can make better decisions.”

– Domanica, former foster youth



Taking control of your body is your responsibility:

Anyone younger than 18 years old is a minor. In New York State, there may be times when a minor does not need anyone to give him or her permission to get health care. If a minor can understand the risks and benefits of treatment, he or she does not need anyone else to consent for:

-  certain mental health services
-  certain alcohol and drug abuse services
-  reproductive health care

Reproductive health care includes:

-  family planning, abortion
-  prenatal care, care during labor and delivery
-  HIV testing and care for STDs
(sexually transmitted diseases)

For general health and mental health services, your parent or legal guardian— or the local Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner— may need to give consent and have access to information.

Unless you are old enough to go by yourself, your caregivers should take you to your health care provider. When they are not available, they are required to make other arrangements to get you to your appointment. In a medical emergency, you may be treated without a consent being obtained.



Maintenance:

-  Be active by participating in extra-curricular activities and in your school or agency recreation program.
-  Understand good nutrition and how to follow a balanced diet.
-  Know who your doctor, dentist and specialists are and how to make appointments.
-  Schedule and attend regular checkups and screenings.
-  Understand your insurance: as a youth in care, you have access to Medicaid until you are 21. Also, if you are 18 or older when you receive final discharge from foster care, you have access to Medicaid until you are 21, if otherwise eligible.
-  Understand your medication and how to refill prescriptions.
-  Attend any ongoing counseling, therapy sessions or support groups.

Ask your worker or a supportive adult for help with any wellness support you have questions about or feel you need more access to.

Resources

Youth In Progress (Medicaid to 21):
www.youthinprogress.org/medicaid_to_21.htm

Youth Success NYC:
www.youthsuccessnyc.org/health/resources.html

Handbook for Youth in Foster Care:
www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5028.pdf

National Institutes of Health
(See Health and Wellness Categories):
www.health.nih.gov/



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