

Need to Know Series:

Getting a Job and Work Experience while in Care



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

Having work experience as an adolescent is the foundation to a successful transition to a career. You are far more likely to succeed if you have had a job for at least one year before leaving care. While in care, you can learn important fundamental job skills by getting a job or volunteering. Learning how to support yourself financially is a key to self-sufficiency.

Eligibility:

If you are 14 years old or older, you may be able to have a part-time job. First, talk with your caseworker and caregivers about what you would like to do and whether this is a good time to have a job. New York State has laws about minimum ages:

-  **Under age 14** you may not be employed (except for jobs like delivering newspapers, babysitting, shoveling snow, yard work).
-  **14 & 15 year olds** may work after school and during school vacations.
-  **16 year olds** and up may work.

Permission:

All employment requires permission of your caregiver and caseworker. Special permission from your local department of social services is required for jobs using power-driven machinery. Be ready to talk to your caseworker about schoolwork and your grades, and also about your behaviors.



Am I ready?

There are some questions to ask yourself and to talk about with your caseworker or supportive adult.

These three areas can help you determine your employment readiness:

-  **Employability**— What skills/abilities do I have?
-  **Motivation**— Am I willing to work? Do I want to work? Why?
-  **Vocational/Job Knowledge**— What type of jobs should I be looking for?

What are the basic skills and qualities I need to have in order to enter the workforce successfully?

1. A strong work ethic and commitment to the job at hand
2. A positive attitude
3. Good communication skills
4. Ability to manage time and multiple priorities
5. Ability to problem-solve and think on your feet
6. Ability to act as a team player
7. Self-confidence in your abilities
8. Ability to take directions and accept feedback
9. Being flexible and able to adapt to any necessary adjustments
10. Ability to work well under pressure and keep your cool

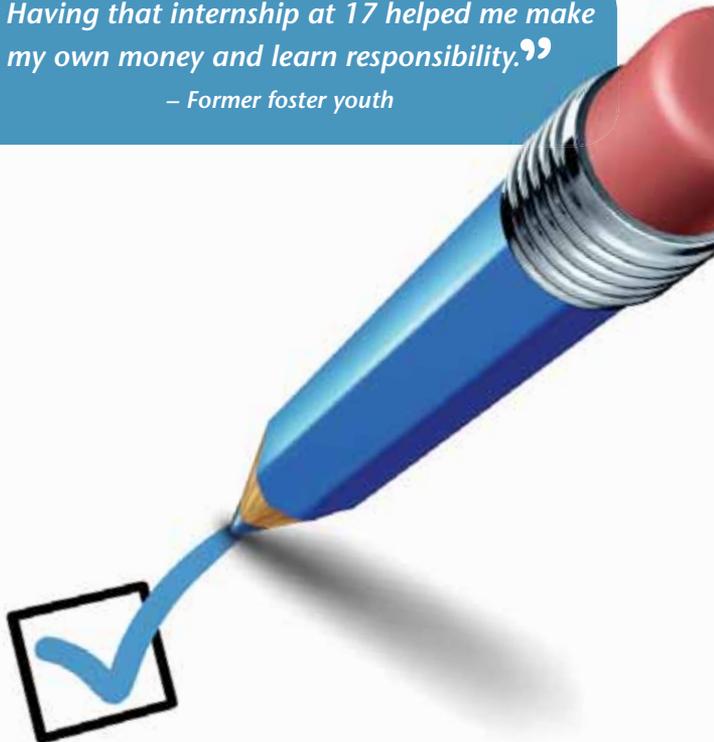


What do I need to apply for a job?

- 🌀 Résumé and a cover letter
- 🌀 Social Security card, birth certificate, photo identification
- 🌀 Transportation to and from the job
- 🌀 The name, address, and office number of people who can give you a recommendation
- 🌀 An employment certificate (“working papers”) if under 18— get information and an application form from your school

“Having that internship at 17 helped me make my own money and learn responsibility.”

– Former foster youth



To apply for working papers, you will need to bring with you:

-  **Your birth certificate.** You have the right to have a copy of your birth certificate – your worker should get it for you.
-  **A letter from your health care provider that says you are healthy and can work.** To get the provider's letter you will have to have a physical exam. You may also need the signature of your parent or legal guardian. Check with your caseworker. *(You don't need working papers for jobs like babysitting, shoveling snow, yard work, or caddying).*
-  **Social Security number.** Ask your worker to help you get a number if you don't have one. You have the right to have a copy of your Social Security card. If you are working and have trouble with your grades or behavior, your caregiver must let your caseworker know. This may affect your permission to work.

A portfolio can also be a valuable tool in assisting you to get a job. Unlike the standard résumé, which focuses on education and work experience, you can develop a portfolio focusing on your achievements and strengths. For example, volunteer work, sports achievements and/or after school activities can show an employer that you have the ability to work in a team and can keep a commitment. Ask your worker or supportive adult to help you create one if you don't have one already.



Where do I look to find work?

Look into local programs and community resources to assist you with career exploration, the development of job skills and employment opportunities.

-  Internet
-  NYS Department of Labor (DOL)
-  Private Industry Council (PIC)
-  Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
-  Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
-  School-To-Work Initiative (STW)

What is the best job for me?

Part of having a positive work experience is to determine where you want to work and what you would like to do. **CareerZone**[®] (www.nycareerzone.org) is a website where you can create a virtual portfolio and personalize it for free. You can explore careers by using their assessment tool. There is an online résumé and cover letter builder and additional tools that can help you make the right choice and find local work opportunities.



Who are my supports?

Adults can play an important role in assisting you. They can help provide opportunities for examining your self-knowledge (abilities, interests, values, personal characteristics and experiences). This can result in a meaningful and successful job choice. Adults can also help you practice the skills you need to successfully complete the job application and interview process.



Resources:

Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)

www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed

Job Corps

www.jobcorps.gov/Home.aspx

Career One Stop

www.careeronestop.org

Department of Civil Service

www.cs.state.ny.us/jobseeker

NYS Department of Labor

www.labor.ny.gov/youth

Career Zone

www.nycareerzone.org

Career Builder

www.careerbuilder.com

Handbook for Youth in Foster Care

www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5028.pdf



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This material was developed by the

**Professional Development Program,
Rockefeller College, University at Albany,**

under a training and administrative services agreement with the

**New York State Office of Children and Family Services
through The Research Foundation of SUNY.**

