

LATE TEENS

16–18

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BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

1

As your teen gets close to the end of school, they'll start thinking about their future plans. You'll probably have some conversations about whether they want to stay on in your home after they turn 18, or if they're thinking about moving out on their own, or moving back to live with their birth family.

Help your teen develop independent living skills that will set them up for life, no matter where they live. By giving your child age-appropriate jobs and responsibilities, you'll be teaching them confidence and self-respect.



WHAT YOU CAN DO.

PROMOTE SELF-CARE. Some teens may have missed out on learning how to look after their own health and hygiene. Have conversations about keeping healthy and well, dressing and grooming themselves and treating minor injuries. Make sure they know how and when to get help from doctors, dentists, counsellors and other professional help.

WORK ON THE SOCIAL SKILLS. It's important for your teenager to speak respectfully and politely to people including teachers, employers and work colleagues, and to handle disagreements calmly and constructively. Teach kids good manners like saying *please* and *thank you* and encourage good conversation skills, including both listening and speaking. Even simple things like ordering food at a cafe can help develop your teen develop social skills and confidence.

START A BANK ACCOUNT. To be a good money manager, kids need to understand how to earn, save and spend money responsibly. Help your teenager open a bank account and make arrangements for part-time job earnings and even pocket money to be paid directly into the account. Doing this while the child is still living at home with you means you can support them when they make mistakes like underestimating bank fees, overspending or failing to keep up with payments. To open a bank account, you will need to present some identity documents. Your caseworker can help locate these if you don't have them at home.

GET INTO THE KITCHEN. Learning to cook isn't just about putting food on the table. It's also about shopping within a budget, and preparing nutritious meals to stay healthy. There are lots of things you can do, including getting your teen involved in shopping, encouraging them to make their own school lunches or having them regularly cook an easy family meal like hamburgers or pasta.

SET SOME REGULAR CHORES. Involving your teen in household cleaning duties such as washing clothes, washing dishes, vacuuming and mowing the lawn will teach them the skills they need to one day keep their own place tidy. It will give you a bit of a break, too!



USEFUL TIP

Get into it!

Encourage your teen to get active in the local community by doing some volunteer work, joining a club or doing some public speaking. Let them see the benefits of being part of a community and having their opinions heard.



USEFUL TIP

Download the Resolve app

An app for careleavers to help them on their journey to independence. Download via Windows, Google Play or the Apple App store.



MORE HELP

FACS Careleavers Line

1800 994 686

A dedicated hotline for young people who have left care.

YOU

you.childstory.nsw.gov.au

All about what kids have the right to ask for, before and after leaving care.

CREATE Foundation

create.org.au

1800 655 105

Mentoring, events, workshops and forums for careleavers.

Australian Electoral Commission

aec.gov.au/enrol

13 23 26

Information on how to enrol to vote online or through the mail.

Money Smart

moneysmart.gov.au

Loads of financial management tips for young people.

SHARE YOUR PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE. Trust your teenager with simple maintenance tasks. Teach them to do things like change a light bulb, test a smoke detector and reset an electrical safety switch. They're handy skills to have, and they'll help your teen feel like they can solve problems and handle responsibility.

ENCOURAGE MOBILITY. It's important your teen knows how to get from one place to another on public transport. Teach them how to use bus and train timetables so that they arrive at their destination on time.

SET UP A TAX FILE NUMBER. Young people who are employed or eligible for Centrelink payments need a Tax File Number. This is something you can help your child organise, but contact your caseworker if you need some help.

TALK ABOUT ENROLLING TO VOTE – AND WHY. Young people aged 16 and above can enrol now so they are ready to vote in federal, state and local elections when they turn 18. This is a good opportunity to remind your teen that their experience and views are important, and that they deserve to have their opinions heard even at a political level. Voting is compulsory in Australia.



We should have a bit of freedom and learn how to look after ourselves without everyone panicking.

16-year-old boy

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

START TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE. Throughout the teenage years, carers and caseworkers can use Life Story work to prompt conversations with the teen about how they're feeling and what they want from their future. Use these conversations to check that the child is getting the right kind of support now, and to start making plans for things like further education and job choices in the future.

DEVELOP A LEAVING CARE PLAN. Stability helps young people transition to adulthood so, where possible, it's incredibly valuable for teens to stay on with their carer even after they've finished school. Whether or not your teen is staying on, a Leaving Care Plan will help address key topics including access to education and training, family contact support, cultural contact support and employment and income support.

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. It's important to talk about the future and make sure the young person has a clear understanding of what will happen next and who they can go to for different kinds of support, such as housing or study payments. These things should be discussed, and documented in the Leaving Care Plan.

MAKE SURE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS ARE IN ORDER. From the age of 16, it's important that your teen has enough proof of identity to pass a 100-point identity check. These checks are required for all sorts of government payments and services, including things like applying for a passport and getting a driving licence. Your caseworker can help you and your teen get those documents organised.

DEVELOPING HEALTHY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

2



Relationships in the teenage years can be highly emotional or strangely detached, loud-and-proud or secretive – and often involve exploring physical intimacy and sexual feelings.

You might not feel ready for this, but you have a big role to play in guiding your teen through this important developmental stage. Through your behaviour and your conversations you can help your teen understand that they can and should have all the love, friendship and happiness in the world.

Teenage relationships may come with additional challenges for kids who have experienced trauma or been exposed to domestic violence. These kids may be at risk of ending up in violent or disrespectful relationships. Sometimes they may be the ones being abused; sometimes they are the ones being abusive. In both cases, teens need support to recognise the choices they have and learn about ways to build relationships.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.

REMINDE TEENS THEY'RE BOSS OF THEIR OWN BODIES. Let your teen know that no-one can touch their body unless they are ready and happy for it to happen. If they're doing something because they think they should, or because everyone else is doing it, then they're not really ready to give their consent and should think again before they go any further.

DEFINE DEAL BREAKERS. Encourage kids to think about what is and isn't okay in a relationship. Tell them that they don't have to put up with being disrespected, disregarded, lied to, verbally abused, emotionally abused or physically hurt by anyone. Any one of these things is a good reason to re-evaluate the relationship. Pointing out good things in your own relationship can sometimes help: *John is a great husband. We're a team when it comes to raising you and your brother.*

BE SENSITIVE TO BREAK-UP TRIGGERS. The end of a teen relationship can be devastating. For kids in care, it may trigger deep feelings around being unwanted or unloved. It's normal for teenagers to be upset after a break-up, but if your child's feelings seem very intense, or go on for a long time, or you think they are at risk of self-harm, get some support from your caseworker or family doctor.

TALK ABOUT STAYING SAFE. Not all teenage relationships involve sex, but this is the time when many young people start to become sexually active – and your teen is legally able to consent to sex after the age of 16. It's sensible to make sure your child knows how to stay safe when sexually active. This includes talking about contraception and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. If this conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs, ask a mentor or caseworker to have this discussion with your teen.



USEFUL TIP

Be your teen's back-up

Remind your teen they can say "no" to anything, from going on a date, to leaving a party or ending a relationship. Let them know they can always call on you to help them get out of any situation that makes them feel uncomfortable, unsafe or pressured.



MORE HELP

1800 Respect

1800respect.org.au
1800 737 732

Online and telephone counselling for people experiencing sexual assault or domestic violence.

Family Planning NSW

fpnsw.org.au
1300 658 886

Providing information about contraception and sexual health.



USEFUL TIP

Make a report

If your teen tells you something about past abuse, contact your caseworker immediately. Disclosure of abuse may lead to investigation and criminal charges. In an emergency, contact the 24-hour Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or the police.



MORE HELP

The Line

theline.org.au

Ideas on keeping relationships healthy and respectful, and avoiding behaviour that makes someone feel frightened, intimidated or humiliated.

Raising Children Network

raisingchildren.net.au

Practical ideas on managing the ups and downs of teen relationships.

TALK ABOUT MUTUAL CONSENT. Sexual activity is only okay when those involved are not being threatened, pressured or tricked into their decision and when they are clearly capable of giving their consent (in other words, they're not drunk or unconscious). Also explain that consent can be withdrawn at any time if a person changes their mind about what's going on. Let your child know that they can always talk to you if they are uncertain about any of this, without getting in trouble.

EXPLAIN THE LAW AROUND SEXTING UNDER AGE 18. Sexting is using the internet or a phone to share nude or sexual images. A lot of teenagers use sexting as a way to flirt, but it's considered a crime when it involves anyone under the age of 18. Sexting can lead to serious penalties including being listed on the sex offender register. Make sure your teenager understands that it's not okay to send, receive or share a nude or sexual image, or to ask someone to take an image of that kind. If your child receives an image, they should delete it and not forward it on. If it came from someone they know, they can tell them they don't want to receive anymore. Otherwise they can unfriend the sender, or block that number from their phone. You may also need to let the school or police know.

EXPLAIN PRIVACY AND HARASSMENT. It is wrong to take naked, revealing or sexual images of someone without their permission, for example when they're in the shower or getting changed. It is also against the law to use sexting to make someone feel humiliated or threatened. Penalties can be serious. If you believe your teen has had inappropriate images taken, or they're being harassed, contact your caseworker and make a report to the police. If the harassment is ongoing, your caseworker may consider getting a protection order against the person, such as an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO).

GET HELP FOR ACTING-OUT. Teens who have been abused, especially sexually abused, may begin to act out their trauma. This could involve repeating the behaviour, either by doing it to other kids or encouraging kids to do it to them. Or it could involve making themselves sexually available to adults. This is risky behaviour and is a sign that the child in your care needs professional help to deal with their trauma. Speak to your caseworker to get some support organised.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED, DO SOMETHING. If you believe the child in your care is having under-age sex, being exposed to pornography, being abused or exploited, or if you think something is triggering memories of past abuse, you must tell your caseworker immediately. Together you can provide the support your child needs.

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE. In NSW, carers and caseworkers share responsibility for making sure that children in care are treated fairly and with respect and that they feel safe at all times. Caseworkers can support carers to provide balanced messages around respect for culture and respect for the safety and dignity of the individual.

ACT QUICKLY ON ILLEGAL BEHAVIOUR. Keeping teens safe is a top priority. If the teen is involved in under-age sex, under-age sexting or a violent or sexual assault, the carer must inform the caseworker so they can respond promptly, arrange support, and make official reports as necessary. Always call 000 if it's an emergency.

GET PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT. If the behaviour is putting the teen or others at risk, and the carer feels like they can't handle it on their own, the caseworker can arrange professional support. It might be necessary to develop a Behaviour Support Plan with input from the carer, the caseworker and a psychologist.

BEING A BETTER DRIVER

Learning to drive is a big milestone for many teenagers. Most parents feel some anxiety when teens start driving, and with good reason. Young drivers make up around 15 per cent of all drivers in NSW, but account for more than a third of all road fatalities. Lack of experience is a factor, but accidents involving teenage drivers are often linked to risky behaviours such as speeding, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, getting distracted, and driving when tired.



WHAT YOU CAN DO.

BE A DRIVING ROLE MODEL. Drive safely and follow the rules of the road at all times, including drinking responsibly when you're driving. Kids are more likely to be involved in car accidents or break road laws when the adults around them have a history of crashes or traffic violations.

ORGANISE LESSONS. Teenagers can apply for a licence to drive a car at the age of 16 (for motorbikes, the age is 16 and nine months). Most agencies are prepared to cover the cost of a set of driving lessons. Before you make any arrangements, check with your caseworker to confirm you will be reimbursed.

GET OUT ON THE ROAD WITH THEM. Professional driving courses are valuable, but your teen can also get experience driving with you. Try to stay calm. If you feel like they're not listening or making mistakes, ask them to pull over and stop, and then talk to them calmly about what they need to be doing.

THINK ABOUT A SAFE DRIVING COURSE. Safe driving has a lot to do with good decision-making. All teenagers, but especially those still inclined to risky behaviour, should be encouraged to do a Safe Drivers Course, run by Roads and Maritime Services. The course teaches young drivers how to reduce road risks and cope with distractions. Talk to your caseworker to see if you can be reimbursed.

LAY DOWN THE LAW. Teens must make sure everyone is wearing a seatbelt, music is at a reasonable volume, and that they don't use phones or other electronic devices, even hands-free. In NSW, L-plate and P-plate drivers must have a zero blood alcohol reading. Other restrictions also apply: check details with Roads and Maritime Services.

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE. The freedom and independence that comes with being a licensed driver makes it easier for teenagers to do important things like go to school, TAFE or university, get to jobs or job interviews, and see family and friends. Caseworkers should be ready with the necessary identity documents so the teen can easily apply for a learner's permit.

FACILITATE LESSONS. Caseworkers may also be able to update a teenager's Case Plan to include driving lessons. In most cases, the cost of driving lessons will be covered.



USEFUL TIP

Check your insurance

Even good drivers have accidents. If your child will be using your car, make sure that your insurance covers teenage drivers. If it doesn't, and something goes wrong, you could end up with a very large bill.



MORE HELP

Roads and Maritime Services

rms.nsw.gov.au

Overseeing licences, managing driving tests and running Safe Driver Courses across NSW.

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GETTING ON TOP OF RISKY BEHAVIOUR

Thrill-seeking is normal among teenagers. They do it to explore their own abilities, test their limits, and express themselves as individuals. Prepare yourself for mistakes and slip-ups, and help your teen to learn from them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.



USEFUL TIP

Choose the challenge

Try to direct your teen to structured activities like rock climbing, parkour or BMX bike-riding. Some of the more risky activities may need approval from your caseworker.



MORE HELP

Kids Help Line

kidshelpline.com.au

1800 55 1800 (24 hours)

Information for parents about risk taking and how to help kids to cope with peer pressure.

Parent Line NSW

parentline.org.au

1300 1300 52

A support service for parents. Browse the website or make use of online or phone counselling.

BE YOUR CHILD'S BACK-UP. Stay in touch with what your child is doing and who they're seeing. Welcome friends over and know who they are. Let your child know you can always help them get out of tricky situations, whether it's picking them up from a party early or helping them work out how to deal with peer pressure.

ENGAGE WITH SCHOOL. Kids who are actively involved in school are less likely to get into risk-taking behaviour. Get kids to try out for sports and school plays, go to camps, join the debating team, the band or the choir, or help out at fundraising days.

LEARN ABOUT BOYS. Chemical changes in the brain during adolescence mean boys are more likely to take risks than girls. The dopamine lift they get is similar to the pleasure of things like sport, achievement, reward, and the reassurance they are loved. Think about how you can make these things part of everyday life for your teen, so they feel less of a need to look for that feeling elsewhere.

HAVE A BREAK FROM FRIENDS. Kids with low self-esteem are more easily influenced by their peers – and teenagers are more than twice as likely to take a risk in the company of friends. If you are concerned about the influence of friends, create an opportunity for your child to spend time away from them. Encourage them to take up a new sport or social activity. Or take a few days off and head out of town. If you go on holiday, make sure you let your caseworker know.

GET SUPPORT FOR EXTREME MOODS OR BEHAVIOUR. When behaviour is dangerous, violent or there is self-harm or sadness that lasts more than a few days, it's vital you seek help from the caseworker or school, as well as professional support. The first priority is to keep the teenager safe. In serious cases, where there is a threat to the safety of the child or others, you may need to contact police.

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

CONSIDER HOW TO HELP THE TEEN. Carers need to keep caseworkers up to date about their teen's behaviour, especially if the behaviour is getting worse. Caseworkers will be able to look into local support services and professional help. If troubles continue to escalate, caseworkers can develop a Behaviour Support Plan with input from the carer and a psychologist.

SUPPORT THE CARER. Sometimes a teen's behaviour gets very challenging or upsetting, and carers find they are struggling to cope. A caseworker can help by thinking about ways to support the carer. Sometimes, a fresh approach or some extra training is useful. Even a few days of respite can help a carer get back on track.

5

FINISHING SCHOOL

Encouraging education and keeping kids at school is one of the best ways to get set for a happy, healthy and productive life as an adult.

Give your teen the message that education is important and that you value learning, even if you didn't finish school yourself. Let them know that completing school and going on to an apprenticeship, traineeship or a degree will give them their best chance of success and independence.

Kids who leave school early are more likely to struggle with unemployment and less likely to come back to study later in life. They will also earn less money over their lifetime than their peers who do finish school.



WHAT YOU CAN DO.

MAKE STUDY A PRIORITY IN YOUR HOME. Help your teen set up a pleasant, comfortable and quiet study space. Make sure they get healthy meals and snacks. Encourage them to exercise regularly. All these things can improve their ability to cope with schoolwork.

FOCUS ON SLEEP. Teenagers with poor sleep struggle to concentrate in class or retain the new things they learn. Do what you can to help your teen get into a healthy sleep routine, including having a regular bedtime. If you think emotional or psychological issues are causing sleep loss, speak to your caseworker to get professional support.

UNDERSTAND THE PRESSURE. The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is a stressful time for all families, and all teenagers are likely to explode every now and then. Try not to overreact. Show your child that you have faith in them by tolerating their mood swings as much as possible and keeping up the love and support. Be especially mindful of things that can trigger emotional reactions from your child, including family contact visits.



It is hard to make friends when you are continuously moving. Also I never get to complete a whole year at one school.

17-year-old girl

ACT EARLY ON LEARNING CHALLENGES. Teenagers who find it hard to learn and feel like they're not doing as well as their classmates are at risk of leaving school early. Keep talking to your child about school so you can pick up on any learning gaps. Stay in contact with the school at parent-teacher interviews or whenever you feel there might be a problem. Ask the school about learning support and other resources that may help your teen. You can also look into tutoring. Your caseworker can help you track down a homework club at a local library or community centre.



MORE HELP

My Future

myfuture.edu.au

Identifies a student's interests and strengths, and gives them insights into suitable careers.

My Skills

myskills.gov.au

Information about different vocational education and training organisations and courses.

Skills One TV

skillsone.com.au

Video case studies on career pathways across traditional trades and emerging skills areas.

Ace Day Jobs

abc.net.au/acedayjobs

Video case studies about people in a variety of roles from sports photographer to reptile keeper.



USEFUL TIP

Visit unis and TAFEs

A number of universities and TAFEs run programs specifically for kids in care to introduce them to the world of tertiary education. Your caseworker can find out what's suitable for you and your teen, and help you apply for a place.

THINK ABOUT SOCIAL CHALLENGES. Kids who feel comfortable with their classmates are more likely to stay on to the end of Year 12. Support your teen by getting to know their friends and making it clear they're welcome in your home. Be alert to problems such as bullying or peer pressure around drugs, alcohol and sexual activity. If things get challenging, talk to the school or your caseworker about strategies that can help. Schools also have counsellors and anti-bullying policies.

KNOW THE RULES. In NSW, all students must stay at school to the end of Year 10. After Year 10 and until they turn 17, they have options. They can leave school to work a minimum of 25 hours a week. They can start an apprenticeship or traineeship. They can do a combination of paid work and school-based training called a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course. Or they can stay on at high school to complete their HSC and perhaps go on to university. Your child's strengths and interests will be the best guide to whether full-time work, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or university education is the best choice for them.

ACCESS THE TEENAGE EDUCATION PAYMENT. Assistance with fees and scholarships can make uni or TAFE possible. Family and Community Services (FACS) provides a special payment for carers with children aged 16 or 17 who are still in part-time or full-time training or education. The payment covers education-related expenses including tuition, school holiday programs, sports registration fees and camps. Your caseworker can help you with your application.

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS. If your child is overwhelmed or stressed by talk of careers and further education, refocus the conversation on their strengths and help them see what sort of roles need those strengths. A great tool for helping kids and carers understand what level of education is required for different jobs is a booklet called *School Subjects You Like and Jobs They Can Lead To* by the Department of Education. See contact details on the opposite page.

HAVE A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE. Further education isn't for everyone, but leaving school and suddenly having nothing to do can be a blow to a teenager's self-esteem, especially if they lose contact with friends or can't find a job. If your child has a strong view about leaving school, talk to them about developing a plan. Help them to assess their options and set themselves up for a happy and successful future as an adult.

GET INVOLVED IN SCHOOLIES WEEK PLANNING. Many kids who get to the end of Year 12 celebrate with a Schoolies Week holiday after their exams are over. Schoolies can be a fun time for teenagers after a year of hard work, but there are dangers. Check in with your child about staying safe and standing up to peer pressure when it comes to things such as under-age drinking, excessive drinking, drug-taking or risky sexual behaviour.

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

KNOW THE CHILD'S STRENGTHS. Sometimes carers have unrealistically high or unnecessarily low expectations for their child's education and future career. Caseworkers can help by getting to know the child's strengths and providing information about what sort of career pathways are available to them.

WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SCHOOL. Caseworkers and carers need to work together to help kids get to school every day and complete their education through to the end of Year 12. Both caseworkers and carers should work with the school to identify what sort of support a teen needs and then connect with the relevant services. Caseworkers should also be reviewing the Education Plan to make sure the teen has the best chance of success.

LOOK FOR UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

The teen in care should be given every opportunity to go on to further education. Most colleges and universities have fee-free and part scholarships to assist with the cost of studying and accommodation. These include Institution Equity Scholarships and Commonwealth Scholarships such as the Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarship. Caseworkers can help carers track down the support programs and payments that could help the child continue their education after Year 12.

TAP INTO FEE-FREE TAFE SCHOLARSHIPS. Smart and Skilled Fee-Free Scholarships cover the fees of certain vocational education and training qualifications in NSW and are available to students who are in, or have been in, out-of-home care.



So many things have happened in my life. My caseworker explains to me what she can do for me. For example, if I need a laptop, she explains to me what she can organise. She is really great and makes things happen. She is really supportive and helpful.

16-year-old boy

FOCUS ON 17. Starting a traineeship or apprenticeship or doing a VET course through school are all great options for kids who are not interested in university education. The main area of concern is around kids who stay on after Year 10, but drop out of school as soon as they turn 17. Kids who don't complete their HSC or engage in any other sort of training will struggle to find work in the future. If the child is determined to leave school at 17, help them see the value in being part of the workforce and becoming financially independent. Work with them to ensure they have a plan for finding work and the confidence to apply for jobs. Let them know they can try TAFE or other studies at any time in the future.

GET SUPPORT STRATEGIES IN PLACE. You and your caseworker might have many conversations with your teen about what they plan to do after high school. Once the teen has turned 15, these plans should be recorded in the young person's Case Plan so the appropriate support and strategies can be put in place. For example, if the young person is expected to turn 18 before they finish Year 12, the caseworker can make sure you have the financial support you need for the placement to continue until high school studies are complete.

**MORE HELP****School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships in NSW**

sbatinnsw.info

A program that allows high school students to start their training while still at school.

School Subjects You Like and Jobs They Can Lead To

education.gov.au/career-bullseye-posters

Helps kids see the pathways between favourite subjects and the jobs they could have one day.

Schoolies Survival Guide

reachout.com/schoolies-survival-guide

Smart and practical advice for teenagers including how to stay safe at parties and in big crowds.

Western Sydney University

westernsydney.edu.au
02 9678 7603

The Lodestar Program at Western Sydney University runs Taster Days for school-aged kids in care, and the Care, Advice and Knowledge Exchange (CAKE) for careleavers currently attending uni.

Newcastle University

newcastle.edu.au
02 9678 7603

Newcastle University runs on-campus residential experiences for Year 9 students (LIVE IT! for boys and Girls' Choices for girls) and is establishing Live, Learn, Grow, a support program for careleavers studying at the university.

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FINDING CAREER PATHWAYS



The teen in your care deserves to find work that makes them happy and that supports a decent standard of living. To get there, they'll need your help to think clearly about their strengths and interests and about the sort of career that suits them best. And they'll have to get the necessary experience or education to make it all happen.

Growing up and finding work is tough for everyone, but may be tougher still for kids in care, especially those that have grown up in families where employment was unstable, erratic or just not a priority. You can help your teen to see the benefits of working hard for the future they want, and encourage them not to give up when things aren't going their way.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.



USEFUL TIP

See the upside of missing out

It can take a while to find a job. Try to help your teen see that even writing job applications and going to job interviews contributes to the skills that will one day get them the job they want. It can help to think of setbacks as "opportunities to learn" instead of "failures".

MAKE A LIST. This is a great opportunity to reflect on strengths and interests. What do they love doing? What do they find easy? What sort of lifestyle do they enjoy? What makes them happy? Write a list, then work with your teenager to find out more about the sort of jobs that match up with their ideas. Also talk about what you see as your teen's strengths and the sorts of jobs you think they would enjoy; you might have some suggestions your teen has never considered.

GET PRACTICAL. Once you have identified the jobs that interest your teen, do the research to find out what sort of education, training or experience they will need. The booklet called *School Subjects You Like and Jobs They Can Lead To* mentioned on page 41 can be a good place to start.

TALK ABOUT JOB-SEEKING SUPPORT. There are services your teen can access to get some help in preparing for work and finding a job. Government agencies that provide free services for job-seekers include Centrelink, JobAccess and Job Active. Contact details are listed on the opposite page.

CHAMPION CREATIVE CAREER PATHWAYS. If the job your teen craves is out of their reach for now, help them think of creative ways to get there. They could offer to do some unpaid work experience (take care to see they are not exploited by an employer), do some volunteering in a related field, or start working in a more junior job so they can get to know an industry or an employer. Encourage them not to be disappointed by setbacks or delays. If they stay patient, passionate and committed, they will give themselves the best chance of reaching their goal.

TALK ABOUT PERSONAL SKILLS. Employers look for skills and experience, but they also look for people who are good communicators and show a willingness to learn. Help your teen understand the difference between how they talk with friends and how they should speak to employers, colleagues or customers. Reassure them that no-one knows all they need to know on the first day, and that their employer will expect them to ask questions and show an interest in finding out more.

THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT CONTROL. For some kids who have been through trauma, being told what to do by a boss or a manager may be an emotional trigger. Have a talk with your teen about what is and isn't okay in the workplace. Explain that when someone gives them instructions or corrects what they're doing, it doesn't mean they're being criticised or controlled. Let them know they're allowed to stick up for themselves or disagree if they need to, but they should do it calmly and constructively. And make it clear that if they argue loudly or get physically violent, they will probably lose their job.

LESSONS IN BEING A TEAM PLAYER. Help your teen understand they're part of a team in the workplace, and that their actions will have consequences for the people they work with. For example, if they have a fight with their boss and decide to walk out, it means that one of their co-workers will have to pick up the extra work.



I like to think my foster family treats me equally, like their own family, and does their best to give me the support I need, but they let me be independent where I can be as well. Free will is the one thing that makes me feel safe in a placement.

17-year-old girl

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

SUPPORT THE TEEN TO APPLY FOR A YOUTH ALLOWANCE. Once teens turn 16, they may be entitled to a Youth Allowance payment. The full Youth Allowance is only available for teens who are still at school or who are in full-time training or further education. If the teen is in part-time work or part-time training, they may have to do some extra activities such as volunteer work or youth programs to be eligible. Caseworkers can help teens to make the appropriate enquiries with Centrelink.

EXPLAIN THE FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF THE YOUTH ALLOWANCE. Caseworkers should make sure carers understand that their allowance will be reduced by the amount of the Youth Allowance once it is being paid. The Youth Allowance lets the teen in care access money independently of their carer so they can start to cover some of their own expenses.

ENCOURAGE TEENS TO BE RESPONSIBLE WITH THEIR MONEY. The Youth Allowance is a substantial independent income that comes direct to the teen from Centrelink. Caseworkers should support carers to encourage young people to get into good financial habits. For example, it's better to save for goals like a new car or computer, than to use it up on video games or big nights out. Carers may also want to talk to their teen about using some of their Youth Allowance to cover personal expenses like clothing and transport.



MORE HELP

JobActive

jobactive.gov.au

13 62 68

Support services available to those receiving the Youth Allowance.

Centrelink

humanservices.gov.au

The agency that delivers a range of payments and services for Australians, including job seekers.

JobAccess

jobaccess.gov.au

1800 464 800

Information and advice for job seekers with disabilities.

Leaving School

schools.nsw.edu.au/leavingschool

A practical guide to leaving school and pursuing a career.

Young People at Work

youngpeopleatwork.nsw.gov.au

Covering the rights and responsibilities of young job seekers and employees.

BELONGING FOR LIFE



Some kids will be excited about turning 18; others may worry about what's going to happen next. Your teen doesn't have to leave your home just because they've turned 18 – but some kids are keen to spread their wings.

You may feel sad and even angry if your child decides to leave. Just let them know they're a big part of your life, you love them and you'll miss them. Keep the door open, offer support and plenty of friendly, practical advice ... it all helps.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.



MORE HELP

CREATE Foundation

create.org.au
1800 655 105

*Mentoring, events, workshops
and forums for kids in care
and those leaving care.*

FACS Careleavers Line

1800 994 686

*A dedicated hotline to
answer questions and provide
support to young careleavers.*



USEFUL TIP

Be kind to yourself

You may feel a sense of loss after the child you have cared for leaves your home. Those feelings are real and valid. Don't ignore your grief or push it away. If the grief feels overwhelming, contact your caseworker for some extra support.

STAYING PUT. Encourage kids to stay on and enjoy the stability of your home and family. You might want to consider other options including guardianship or adoption; talk to your caseworker to find out more. Be aware that the practice of adoption was not known in traditional Aboriginal communities and that adoption of an Aboriginal child cannot happen unless the Court is satisfied that it is in the child's interests and preferable to any other order which could be taken by law.

STAY CONNECTED. If your teen is preparing to leave your home and care, tell them you want to keep in contact and stay in touch. Depending on your relationship, this might mean visiting their new place, inviting them over for Sunday lunch regularly, phone calls or simply 'staying connected' just as any parent would when their child leaves the nest. Help them build a support network of caring adults they can turn to as they learn to live independently, including your extended family, trusted members of the community, or even the family GP.

KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN. It is not unusual for teens to grab the opportunity to move out of their carer's home, and then want to return a year or so later. Let your child know you would welcome their return, whenever they are ready.

STAY POSITIVE. You might disagree with your teen's decision and worry about how it will affect their wellbeing or their prospects for the future. If that's the case, raise your concerns with your caseworker. Otherwise, focus on the positive and try to make the transition as easy as possible for everyone concerned.

WHAT YOUR CASEWORKER CAN DO.

ENCOURAGE STABILITY. Caseworkers play a role in encouraging kids to stay with their carers in a stable, family environment. They can also explain the different sorts of financial support that are available after a teenager finishes school.

ARRANGE ONGOING CONTACT. Kids in care need stable, positive relationships with adults they can trust. Ongoing connections and contact reassure the teen they are loved and valued, and they have someone they can call on when they need help. The caseworker can support and record these arrangements.

PULL TOGETHER THE DOCUMENTS. Kids leaving care need copies of important documents including their birth certificate, health care card, Medicare card, student card, driving licence and Tax File Number. The caseworker should gather the documents and make sure the teenager can satisfy a 100-point identity check.