

SELF-STUDY COURSE

Supporting Legal Rights for Teens A guide for caregivers and teens preparing for the legal rights and responsibilities of turning 18

October 2018

2.5 Hours Credit

This self-study was developed utilizing concepts from the following sources:

- Legal Rights for Teens, presentation by Meg Zaletel, attorney, (2018, February 13.)
- Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles. <http://doa.alaska.gov/dmv/> (2018)
- US Department of State Travel.State.Gov. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html> (2018)
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Division of Public Health. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Pages/birth/default.aspx> (2018)
- Social Security Administration. <https://www.ssa.gov/> (2018)
- Alaska Court System Self-Help Center: Family Law. <http://www.courts.alaska.gov/shc/family/selfhelp.htm> (2018)
- Alaska Legal Services Corporation. <https://alaskalawhelp.org> (2018)
- Permanent Fund Division. <https://pfd.alaska.gov> (2018)

This self-study course was developed by Kimberly Mouriquand for the Alaska Center for Resource Families.

If you wish to receive training credit for reading this self-study, please fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire at the back of this course. Return the questionnaire to the Alaska Center for Resource Families for 2.5 hours of training credit. This course is yours to keep for further reference.



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The Alaska Center for Resource Families, a project of Northwest Resource Associates, is under contract with the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services to provide training and information to resource families statewide.

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Acknowledgments

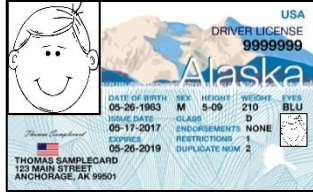
This self-study was written by Kimberly Mouriquand of the Alaska Center for Resources Families with guidance and support from Meg Zaletal. The final version of this self-study was assembled with the help of Naomi Davidson, Yvonne Hill, and Kim Ford.

NOTE: This self-study strives to be accurate and up to date. However, policies and procedures may change or be slightly different in your area of the state. In cases of conflicting information, regulations, statutes, and OCS policies and procedures take precedence over the information in this self-study. Direct any questions to your local OCS office.

Introduction

Teaching independent living skills is an essential element of parenting teens and young adults. An important part of this process is being able to recognize limitations and where a young person may need or want additional support, even though legally we now refer to them as an “adult”. We’re going to look at some of the tasks foster/adoptive parents can be working with teens on prior to their 18th birthday as well as some things to consider when helping a youth to prepare for and navigate adulthood after their 18th birthday. For purposes of this self-study, “teen” will be used to describe a person under the age of 18; “young adult” will be used to describe a person 18 or older, still in OCS custody; and “youth” will be used when the material will apply to both a teen or young adult.

Foster/adoptive parents need to have a formal transition plan developed with the youth in their home to help them navigate. Plans should include, but not be limited to: gathering important documents (like IDs, social security cards, birth certificates, tribal membership or BIA documents, credit reports etc.), preparing for conversations about things like taxes, wills, power of attorney documents, guardianships, and conservatorships, as well as addressing basic life skills like cooking, paying bills, budgeting, etc. For the purpose of this study, we’ll be focusing on the legal aspects, conversations and paperwork needed to prepare a youth for transition to age 18. We’ll break these down into more manageable steps, though it’s important to note that not all will apply for each young person and that plans and steps should always include the youth.



Identification Documents

Supporting youth in applying for identification documents

One of the first important steps is assisting youth in obtaining some form of identification. This can be an Alaska identification card, instruction (or learner's) permit, a driver's license, or passport.

Driver's License, Identification Cards, Passports

For obtaining an Alaska identification card, instruction (or learner's) permit, a driver's license, the youth can visit the [Alaska DMV Site](http://doa.alaska.gov) and print Form 478. Your job is to help the youth to fill out the application. You'll need to support the youth in setting up an appointment with their caseworker so that they can attend the meeting at the DMV and bring with them the necessary documents for obtaining an ID/Permit/License in the state of Alaska. For a list of required documents, you can visit the Alaska DMV website.

Alaska DMV Web links

Alaska DMV Site here:

[http://doa.alaska.gov/DMV/akol/st
ateid.htm](http://doa.alaska.gov/DMV/akol/stateid.htm)

Alaska DMV Form 478:

[http://doa.alaska.gov/DMV/forms/
pdfs/478.pdf](http://doa.alaska.gov/DMV/forms/pdfs/478.pdf)

Passport Web links

Travel.State.Gov for Passports:

[https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/
passports/requirements/forms.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/forms.html)

List of required additional documents:

[https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/
passports/apply-renew-passport/apply-
in-person.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/apply-renew-passport/apply-in-person.html)

If a youth also needs a passport, head over to [Travel.State.Gov](http://travel.state.gov) and find Form DS-11. This is the form needed to apply for a passport for the first time. You must also apply in person. You'll need to work closely with the youth to set up an appointment with their case worker as applying for a passport requires several documents the caseworker will have to provide for the process. In addition, the documents must be signed in person when applying so the caseworker will need to be present.

If the youth in your home is 18 years of age, they can complete both of these applications and sign them without the approval or assistance of their caseworker at OCS. They are legally an adult and can make these decisions despite being in custody. They, of course, will still need access to the supporting documents (birth certificate, social security card, etc). You should still prepare and help them navigate these documents and discuss with the youth that they should keep their case worker informed.

Birth Certificate

Each state may have its own form, requirements, and fees to request an original copy of a birth certificate. No matter who you are, you must apply for your birth certificate from the state in which you were born.

Regardless of the state a youth was born in, OCS caseworkers can provide a youth a copy of their birth certificate if it is needed, however they do not provide them their own original copy. If the youth would like their own copy, was born in Alaska, and is 14 years of age or older, they can request a copy of their own birth certificate through the Alaska Vital Records office.

Applying for a birth certificate
OUTSIDE of Alaska:
Visit <https://www.vitalchek.com/birth-certificates> or do a quick google search
“How do I order an original birth
certificate in _____(fill the name
of the state)” .

To request a birth certificate for a person born in the state of Alaska, the request can be made several ways. A youth would need to download or pick up a copy of the State of Alaska Birth Certificate Form. Teens who are 14 or older and who do not have a valid state ID or driver’s license can use their school ID to verify their identity.

Information a youth will need in order to fill out this application:

1. Full name listed on the birth certificate
2. Date of birth
3. The name of the city or village they were born in
4. Mother’s full name prior to marriage (her maiden name)
5. Father’s full name

Once the form is completed, it can be returned to the office of Vital Records in a few ways. They accept the form via mail, email, fax or in person. If the youth is living in Juneau, Fairbanks, or Anchorage, they can visit the Vital Records office to process the paperwork in person. Birth certificates have a \$30 fee.

Social Security Card

Application for a social security card is very specific. If the youth has a social security card either with their birth parent or in the OCS file, you’ll be working with the social security office to apply for a replacement card. For the purposes of this study, we’re going to review the steps to obtain a replacement card, as this is the most likely scenario for a teen or young adult in OCS custody.

To apply for a replacement social security card, a youth will need the following:

1. One document that can prove their identity. This can be a driver’s license, state ID card, or a U.S. passport. The social security office will only accept ORIGINAL documents, they cannot accept a photocopy. They do recognize that not all persons have these

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documents. They may be able to accept another form of identity such as a school ID card or school records, certified copy of a medical record, or an employee identity card. It's recommended that if a youth does not have a driver's license, state ID card, or passport that they first contact the social security administration to verify another form of identity that can be used. You can call or support your youth in calling at 1-800-772-1213.

2. Information needed:

- a. Youth's full legal name
- b. Social security number
- c. Place of birth, date of birth
- d. Mother and Father's full name and social security numbers. If the teen is under the age of 18, the application requires both parents' social security numbers. The application states that if the number is unknown and cannot be obtained to check "unknown."

Once the youth has completed the form, they can submit the paperwork in one of two ways. Much like the birth certificate, if the youth lives in Juneau, Anchorage, or Fairbanks, they can contact the local social security office to file the application in person. The other option is to mail the application along with the original document to prove identity to your local social security office. They will return your identification, but you will be without it in the meantime. Filing the application online is not currently available for persons with a driver's license or state ID issued in the state of Alaska.

<p>For the form to apply for a birth certificate you can visit: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Pages/birth/default.aspx</p> <p>For the form to apply for a social security card you can visit: https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf</p>
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One thing that is important to know about birth certificates and social security cards: OCS is obligated to provide original copies of these documents to young adults when they are released from OCS custody. This, however, may not be at their 18th birthday.

Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB)

Alaska Native and American Indian (AN and AI) young adults may need assistance in obtaining a certificate of degree of Indian blood documentation. The CDIB is also sometimes referred to as a BIA card. OCS is required to provide a copy of the CDIB upon the young adult's release from custody. If however, a young adult does not receive access to or OCS did not complete the process to obtain the CDIB, they can begin that process of applying on their own.

The process for requesting a certificate of degree of Indian blood requires gathering information and documents regarding the lineal ancestors of a person. Young adults will need to gather full names of their parents, grandparents and great grandparents. If female members are married and have a name change, they will also need to know their maiden names. Additionally, the young adult also needs to know the date of birth of these family members, as well as the tribe and roll

number. If family members are deceased, the young adult will also need to know the year the family member passed away.

For young adults who have been adopted, the request for CDIB is based on their birth family's lineage. This means that if the young adult is not AN or AI biologically, and the adoptive family is, they are not eligible for a CDIB. If the young adult has been adopted by parents who are not AN or AI, the young adult may still be able to apply for a CDIB, but they must have access to information listed above from their birth family.

The following are the BIA Offices to mail the documents or to deliver in person:

Anchorage

BIA- Tribal Government Services
3601 C Street, Suite 1100
Anchorage, AK. 99503
12th Floor (in person)

Fairbanks

BIA- Tribal Government Services
Fairbanks Agency
101 12th Ave., Room 166
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Juneau

BIA-Tribal Government Services
P.O. Box 21647
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1647
709 W. 9th Street, 3rd Floor, Federal Building

Documents needed:

1. A birth certificate that establishes the relationship to parents who are enrolled in a federally recognized tribe. For young adults who have been adopted, Alaska's state vital records do allow adoptees to purchase a copy of their pre-adoptive birth certificate.
2. It begins to get complicated when a young person's parents were not enrolled in a federally recognized tribe, but a more distant relative, like a grandparent or great grandparent was. Youth will need a copy of their birth parent's birth or death certificate to establish their relationship with the grandparent (who would be enrolled with a federally recognized tribe). If the young adult is unable to access these documents, they should contact their local BIA office for assistance.



Supported Decision Making & Documents

How to help young adults navigate important legal documents

Not all of us are ready to be on our own of the day we turn 18. Many of us had continued support and guidance from our parents as we navigated those first few years of adulthood. It could be argued that there is no such thing as being “fully independent” and many of us continue to rely on support and guidance from family and friends. This is no different for a youth who is turning 18 while in OCS custody. This section of our self-study is going to explore documents and roles that support decision making for a young adult while giving a foster/adoptive parent the green light to assist them in the process.

Release of Information Documents

First, let’s discuss Release of Information forms. Release of Information is often abbreviated as ROI. A release of information is just that. It allows an entity, like a mental health agency, physician, or educational department to release specified information, usually information that is protected by HIPAA, to a particular party identified in the release. ROI’s can also sometimes allow the third party to discuss information released as well as provide documents. If a young adult would like for their foster /adoptive parent to be able to access information about them, they can request from the entity their release of information document. The young adult should always review the form with a trusted adult prior to signing so that they are aware of what type of information will be released by signing the form, how long the release will be in effect, what information they would like to restrict from being released, how to revoke the release of information, etc.

A release of information can be an appropriate supported decision making document when a young adult needs assistance understanding documents to apply for assistance, loans, applications for jobs or school, etc. It can allow a foster/adoptive parent to help them navigate their medical or mental health history and better understand what services and supports might be available. A ROI may be the appropriate supported decision making document needed when the young adult needs help understanding the content or situation, but feels confident in their own advocacy and decision skills.

Power of Attorney Documents

Next, let’s break down what a Power of Attorney is. A Power Of Attorney, commonly referred to as a POA, is when a young adult signs a legal document stating that they are giving another adult the right to make decisions for them. POAs do not take away the young adult’s right to make decisions, but allows them to ask for assistance when needed and allows for the third party to step in when help is requested. An young adult can sign a general power of attorney allowing all decision making to a third party when requested, or the power of attorney can be specific, as in only for medical, educational, or financial decisions. Let’s break down some of the specific POAs.

It's important to help a young adult understand the information they are allowing others to have access to as well as the decision making abilities granted by each of these documents. For the purpose of this study, we refer to a POA as a supported decision making document; however it's very important for a young adult to be aware that a POA does allow a 3rd party to make decisions without including the young adult. Young adults should only grant the amount of authority to a third party that is needed to provide them support and guidance.

General Power of Attorney Booklet
<http://courts.alaska.gov/shc/family/docs/poa-booklet.pdf>

For more information and an example
Alaska Advance Health Care
Directive form, visit:
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Director/Documents/advancedirective.pdf>

Educational Power of Attorney

When a young adult turns 18 years of age, the school district places responsibility in their hands and is no longer obligated to coordinate and communicate with the foster/adoptive parent. As the foster/adoptive parent, having an open conversation about remaining an advocate and someone who can continue to provide support is essential. This allows the young adult to continue to have the support and guidance of their foster/adoptive parent while requiring the school district to include the foster/adoptive parent in the decision making process. An example could be if the young adult has an individualized education plan; the foster/adoptive parent can continue to participate and support the young adult in these meetings and ensure they fully understand if supports or services are being continued or discontinued. An educational POA may be the appropriate supported decision making document when a young adult wants to focus on their education and still have an active advocate help them navigate educational decisions. Since there is not a specific form for a "Educational Power of Attorney", young adults and foster parents can find an example of the language used for this type of an agreement by contacting the Disability Law Center by calling 1-800-478-1234 or by email at akpa@dlcak.org

Financial Power of Attorney

Turning 18 years old does not mean that financial stability and savvy are inherent. A financial power of attorney document can allow a foster/adoptive parent to provide support and guidance regarding financial decisions as well as intervene when the young adult requests assistance. Some examples of areas a financial power of attorney can be helpful: when setting up a new bank account, managing credit cards, preparing/paying taxes, applying for financial assistance, purchasing insurance, managing income (like social security benefits, disability benefits, or paychecks), or investing. It also allows a foster/adoptive parent to step in when requested, like if a young adult forgets to pay a bill and calls for support. A foster/adoptive parent would be able to access their funds and pay the bill for them. They also are helpful in situations where a young adult is not present. A POA for a bank account can allow the youth to travel and still have a trusted adult who is able to access their funds for them in a time of need. One important note, a financial power of attorney is automatically voided upon a person's death. If the young adult with whom you are the financial power of attorney for passes away, you will no longer have the ability to navigate financial affairs on behalf of them.

Advance Health Care Directive (or Health Care Power of Attorney)

One of the most powerful supported decision making documents that a foster/adoptive parent can discuss with a young adult is an Advanced Health Care Directive, sometimes also referred to as a Living Will or Health Care Power of Attorney. Upon turning 18 years of age, medical decisions rest with the young adult, despite remaining in the custody of OCS. An Advanced Health Care Directive allows for a young adult to direct medical and mental health care and decisions when they are no longer able to make that decision either because of illness or incapacity. A young adult, can direct for a specific person to be their health care proxy, meaning they are allowing another trusted adult to make health care decisions for them or the directive can specifically define what type of medical or mental health treatment they wish to receive in the event that they are not able to communicate that to a physician. These documents can also allow for a foster/adoptive parent to remain active in assisting a young adult navigate and manage chronic health care situations. An additional topic to breech with a young adult is that in the absence of a health care directive, if something were to happen that required a medical provider to seek guidance, decision making defaults back to the birth parent, siblings, or legal guardian (if still in OCS custody) of the young adult, even if parental rights have been terminated. Medical professionals may not have access to information regarding parental rights at the time of a medical emergency. If a young person does not want their birth family or their OCS case worker to make those decisions, a health care directive can let medical professionals know who to contact.

If these documents are completed, they should be held on record with all local hospitals so that in the event of admission, the hospital will have access to their wishes. An important note for foster/adoptive parents about Advanced Health Care directives: these documents do NOT allow foster/adoptive parents to make medical decisions for a young adult when that person is conscious and able to make the decision on their own.

Some things to consider when discussing Release of Information and Power of Attorney documents with youth.

1. You can begin discussions with teens regarding these documents and should as part of their transition plan; however;
2. These documents cannot be signed prior to the 18th birthday. The young adult must be 18 years old for ROI and POA documents to be valid and cannot be coerced.
3. POA documents in Alaska must be notarized or witnessed by two adults to be valid.
4. Young adults can sign these documents while still in the custody of OCS.
5. ROIs and POAs are supported decision making documents. They are not intended for the young adult to sign and relinquish all responsibility. When discussing these types of documents, a foster/adoptive parent should explore with the young adult their needs and how these types of documents can best support them.
6. Not all of these documents are appropriate for all young adults.
7. Both ROIs and POAs are time limited. The young adult needs to be well informed that if they no longer wish for these types of documents to be used, they have the right to revoke them.

8. A young adult should be educated on how to properly revoke a POA.
9. ROIs and POAs do not place liability on the foster/adoptive parent for whom they are issued to. Example: if there is a financial POA in place and a young adult writes a bad check, the foster/adoptive parent is not responsible for the reimbursement of funds.

Wills

If you're going to discuss with a young adult an advance health directive, you should also consider having a conversation with them about creating a written will. While this can be an uncomfortable topic, it is important to discuss with a young adult who they would like their possessions to go to when they pass away. In a will, the young adult can decide who receives their possessions and how they would like money they have to be distributed. They also need to identify a personal representative, also called an executor. This is a person who is recognized by the court to ensure the wishes documented in the will are executed.

The Alaska Law Help website offers a tutorial on preparing a will.

<https://alaskalawhelp.org/classroom/preparing-your-own-will/introduction-to-wills/preparing-your-own-will-introduction?ref=pOExE#DD8712F6-1318-4B62-9B45-5EC1AE0AC855>

How to deposit a will with the Alaska court system:

<https://public.courts.alaska.gov/web/forms/docs/pub-14.pdf>

A young adult may not be up for writing a formal will and testament. Alaska recognizes handwritten or holographic wills. A young adult can simply document their wishes in their own handwriting and sign the document. A holographic should not be notarized. It is intended to be a handwritten and informal document expressing one's wishes.

It's also a good idea to consider depositing the will with the Alaska court system. While alive, the will is kept confidential with the court system, however upon death, the will becomes public record.

Conservatorships

Sometimes a young adult needs a responsible party to manage and oversee their finances in a more formal way than a financial power of attorney allows for. This can include paying rent and utility bills, preparing taxes, and managing personal property on behalf of a young adult. A court can appoint a conservator in these cases. A conservator is responsible for managing any incoming money as well as paying any bills or debts on behalf of the young person through their accounts. Typically, the OCS caseworker along with other parties involved, like the guardian ad litem, will petition the court for a conservator on behalf of a young adult when it is believed that they cannot manage financially without significant oversight. This usually happens as the youth is nearing exiting the custody of OCS. A conservatorship is considered by the court when the young adult is unable to manage their financial responsibilities due to many reasons. Some examples can be physical illness, mental health issues, disability, etc.

Some things to consider regarding a decision to become a young adult’s conservator:

1. A court must decide that a young adult is not capable of the financial responsibilities associated with being an adult and then order a conservator. It can be an involuntary decision for the young adult.
2. The young adult does not retain the decision making capabilities regarding finances afforded by a financial power of attorney.
3. Unlike a power of attorney, which can be revoked by either party at any time, a petition must be filed with the court to review termination or any changes of the conservatorship.
4. A conservator is charged with ensuring the young adult’s finances are responsibly cared for and in their best interest, not the conservator’s best interest.
5. The young adult is not required to live with the conservator.
6. Conservators are required to file an annual report with the court that documents important information about the finances of the young adult, where they live, how money and property were managed, among other things.

An example annual report for conservatorship can be found at: <https://public.courts.alaska.gov/web/forms/docs/pg-225.pdf>

Legal Guardianships of Adults

Prior to a youth’s 18th birthday, when there are questions from their team about their ability to live independently without significant oversight, a discussion regarding a legal guardianship will likely need to occur. Much like a conservatorship, the OCS caseworker and/or guardian ad litem, may petition the court to assign a legal guardian for a young adult upon turning 18. The Alaska Court System Self Help website states that a court will determine if an adult is incapable of maintaining their own physical health or safety. A legal guardian of an adult has the same rights and responsibilities as a legal guardian of a minor in many respects. Legal guardians can be responsible for helping the young adult obtain and maintain housing, make health care

For Additional Information and Guidance about Adult Guardianships:
<http://www.dlcak.org/files/pdf/Publications/GuardianshipinAK.pdf>

decisions with or on behalf of the young adult, manage finances, among others. The guardian determines where the young adult can live, is charged with making sure they have everything they need, is responsible for making sure the health and safety of the young adult is taken care of, is able to give consent for medical treatment, and if there is not a separate conservator, may be in charge of the young adult’s money.

Some things to consider regarding the role of a legal guardian of an adult:

1. Legal guardianships should be discussed with the youth in your home. As much is developmentally appropriate, the youth should be included in this decision.
2. Just as with a conservatorship, a petition to the court is required for any changes or to terminate a legal guardianship relationship.

3. Legal guardians are not responsible for harm committed by the adult they are guardian to.
4. A young adult is not required to live with their legal guardian.
5. While a legal guardian is responsible for ensuring a young adult receives proper medical care, they are not authorized to consent to abortions, sterilization, psychosurgery procedures, or the removal of an organ (unless medically required for life or well-being) on behalf of the young adult.
6. Becoming a legal guardian can mean a lifelong commitment to a young adult, depending on the circumstances.
7. Unless a separate conservator is assigned, a legal guardian holds the same responsibilities regarding finances as a conservatorship.
8. Two different people can be appointed by a court, called co-guardianship. This allows for dual consensus on behalf of the best interest of a young adult. The co-guardians cannot work independently of each other though, so this should be taken into consideration.
9. A legal guardian petition cannot be filed with the Alaska court prior to the youth's 18th birthday.
10. In the event of the legal guardian's death, the legal guardian cannot name a replacement guardian. The court will identify a new legal guardian for the young adult.



Additional Adult Responsibilities

Don't forget about...

There are many other responsibilities that come with turning 18 years of age. Below are just a few that foster/adoptive families can talk with youth about and prepare them for the options that come.

Registering to Vote

If a young adult is interested in voting, they may need some guidance on how to register to vote. If the young person has a valid driver's license or state ID card they can register online. You can also register to vote in person by filling out the State of Alaska voter registration application and following the instructions on the second page.

Registering for the Selective Service

Don't forget that men, ages 18 to 25, are required to register with the Selective Service within 30 days of the 18th birthday. Registering for the Selective Service is not joining the military, but is required by law in the event of a draft. One important thing to note regarding the Selective Service when helping a transgender young adult: according to [www.SSS.gov](http://www.sss.gov), "Individuals who are born female and changed their gender to male are not required to register. U.S. citizens or immigrants who are born male and changed their gender to female are STILL required to register." You can support a transgender young adult in contacting the Selective Service at 1-888-644-1825 to discuss registration requirements or assist in completing a "Request for Status Information Letter." This letter is designed to determine whether an individual is required to register.

Applying for the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD)

It is important to note, if the young adult is still in OCS custody past their 18th birthday, the OCS caseworker is still responsible for applying for the PFD. However, if the young adult has exited custody and still requires assistance, the first step in applying for a young adult's first PFD is helping them determine if they are eligible to apply. It is usually safe to assume that if you resided in Alaska for the January to December prior to the current year, you are eligible. However there are times when a youth may not have been physically present in Alaska during the entire year. Alaska's PFD website has an Information and Instructions booklet to help guide the process. Since each adult's application process can be different based on circumstances, it's recommended that a foster/adoptive parent along with the young adult they are supporting, utilize this guide or contact the PFD office directly to assist with the first application process.

Alaska Division of Elections
website

<http://www.elections.alaska.gov/Core/howtoregisterorupdateyourvoterregistration.php>

Selective Service:
www.sss.gov

Permanent Fund Dividend
Information & Instructions
Booklet

<https://pfd.alaska.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zpc0DJj-YYEY%3d&tabid=425&portalid=6>

Filing for Taxes

Teens and young adults alike need guidance when it comes to tax preparation. Many youth have jobs prior to exiting custody and before their 18th birthday. Youth who are income earning may need assistance when it comes to filing their taxes each year.

Some general tips are identified below for helping a youth prepare for and file their tax return.

1. Discuss the difference between state and federal income taxes. Alaska does not have a state income tax, but many other states do.
2. Talk with the youth about the forms needed to file taxes.
 - a. W-2 from employer
 - b. 1099-MISC for reporting PFD income.
 - c. Documentation of Social Security Benefits
 - d. Tax documents from the previous year
 - e. Others
3. How will the youth receive their return? If they would like the money to be directly deposited to their account, they'll need to know their account number and routing number to their bank. If not, where will they have their check mailed to?
4. Talk with the youth about sometimes having to pay taxes instead of receiving a tax return.
5. Consider seeking out the advice of a certified public accountant.

Helpful Links for Tax Conversations and Discussions

State Income Tax vs. Federal Income Tax

<https://www.irs.com/articles/state-income-tax-vs-federal-income-tax>

IRS Tax Tips

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/taxpayers-should-check-out-these-helpful-tax-tools>

Purchase and Ownership of Firearms

In Alaska, an adult age 18 or older can purchase long guns. Licensed foster homes are obligated to follow the rules and regulations for firearms, even if those firearms are owned by a young adult in OCS custody residing in their home. 7 AAC 10.1080 requires that ANY firearms must be unloaded and stored in a locked gun safe or other locked place. They cannot be visible or accessible to youth in care. Additionally, ammunition must be stored separately from the firearms, and again not accessible to youth in care. Foster parents are also required to complete a Firearms Safety Plan which is part of the Plan of Care document.

If the youth in your home expresses interest in purchasing or owning a firearm while still in your care, some things to talk with them about:

1. Review the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) with the young adult in your home. The RPPS means that a foster parent makes careful and sensible parenting decisions through the knowledge of the youth's age and developmental level and that the foster parent will consider the health, safety, and best interests of the youth while balancing the decision with a need to encourage emotional and developmental growth in a youth. Foster parents are required to ensure the safety of all occupants of their home, including the young adult with regard to access and use of firearms. Your responsibilities

regarding the RPPS should be discussed with the young adult in regards to firearm use, access, and storage.

2. What is your comfort level with a firearm in the home? A licensed foster home is not required to have or allow firearms in their home. This should be discussed with a young adult who is considering firearm ownership. If you are not going to allow a firearm in the home, what is the young adult's plan to ensure the firearm is stored safely outside of your home?
3. Has the young adult notified and discussed owning a firearm with her caseworker? A foster home is required to notify caseworkers, care coordinators and the parents of a youth if there are firearms in the home, this includes a firearm owned and stored at the home by a young adult in OCS custody.
4. If your home does not currently have firearms, and you are going to allow the young adult to have one in your home, how does the young adult intend to make sure rules and regulations are followed? Will she purchase a safe? What is her plan to store ammunition? What is your plan to ensure the young adult is following the rules and regulations as well?
5. If your home currently has firearms, are you willing to have the young adult's firearm stored in the same place as yours currently?
6. Ask for a copy of the Fire Arm Safety Plan and work with the young adult to complete the plan in a manner that meets their needs as well as abides by regulations AND your own family's policy on firearm instruction, handling, and use.

Other Areas

There are many additional areas that foster/adoptive parents should be mindful of when it comes to helping youth prepare for adulthood. This self-study cannot cover them all, but here are a few others to consider depending on the needs and wants of the young person in your home.

- Checking and monitoring your credit report
- Applying for or renewing medical insurance
- Applying for a loan
- Applying for financial aid for school (Free Application for Federal Student Aid aka FAFSA)
- Applying for secondary education or vocational school
- Opening a checking or savings account

Additionally, we don't want you to do this alone. Each region of the state has an Independent Living Program and OCS caseworkers called Independent Living Specialists who are there to help youth age 16 and up with some of these skills as well. Reach out to your regional office (<http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/independentliving/contact.aspx>) to find out if the young person in your home can start working with an Independent Living Specialist.

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