

CASA Instruction Guide

My Future Plan For Arkansas Youth Ages 14 & Up

A Guide for Supporting Youth in Foster Care
Transitioning to Adulthood

Introduction

This handbook equips CASA volunteers with the knowledge and tools to help foster youth ages 14 & up complete the 'My Future Plan for Arkansas Youth' worksheet. It provides section-by-section guidance, conversation strategies, advocacy tips, and documentation examples to ensure every youth has a meaningful, youth-driven transition plan.

When to Introduce It

Introduce the worksheet after you have established rapport with the youth - typically after 2-3 visits. The youth should feel comfortable with you before discussing future planning. Never introduce it during a crisis or when the youth is emotionally distressed.

Suggested Timeline by Age

For Ages 14-16

Focus on:

- Learning
- Awareness
- Building support systems
- Exploring future goals

For Ages 16-17

Focus on:

- Skill development
- Planning
- Connecting youth with resources
- Identifying gaps
- Education plans

For Ages 17-18

Focus on:

- Completing transition plans
- Housing
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Support networks

How Often to Review Worksheet

- > At or before each birthday milestone (14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
- > When the youth expresses new goals or interests

Section 1: My Important Documents

Why It Matters

Youth need important documents to:

- Get a job
- Open a bank account
- Enroll in school
- Obtain housing
- Access services

CASA Discussion Questions

- Do you know where your documents are?
- Have you seen your birth certificate?
- Do you have a State ID?
- Do you know your Social Security number?

CASA Advocacy

If documents are missing:

1. Notify the caseworker.
2. Ask what steps are being taken to obtain them.
3. Follow up until obtained.

Section 1A: Selective Service (Males)

Why It Matters

Federal law requires most males to register for Selective Service within 30 days of turning 18.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Have you heard of Selective Service?
- Do you know when registration is required?
- Has anyone shown you how to register?

CASA Advocacy

Ensure youth receive information before age 18.

Section 2: School & Future

Why It Matters

Education and career planning increase future opportunities.

CASA Discussion Questions

- What are your plans after high school?
- Are you interested in college, trade school, military, or employment?
- Have you spoken with your school counselor?
- What careers interest you?

CASA Advocacy

Ask whether the youth has:

- Completed Casey life skills assessments
- Discussed graduation requirements
- Explored training programs
- Learned about FAFSA and scholarships
- Learned about ETV funding
- Been on college tours yet
- Take college prep tests, SAT or ACT

Section 3: My Life After 18

Why It Matters

Youth should understand their options before adulthood.

CASA Discussion Questions

- What do you think life will look like at 18?
- Who can you call if you need help?
- Where do you plan to live?
- What concerns do you have about adulthood?

CASA Advocacy

Encourage discussions regarding:

- Transition planning
- Trusted adult connections
- Life Skills programs
- Voter registration
- Military enlistment options if the youth doesn't want to stay in care or go to college

Section 4: Housing Options

Why It Matters

Safe and stable housing is critical to successful transition.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Where do you want to live after high school?
- Have you heard of Extended Foster Care?
- Do you know about Supervised Independent Living programs
- What support would you need to live independently?

CASA Advocacy

Ask if youth have been informed about:

- Extended Foster Care
- Supervised Independent Living Programs
- Housing assistance
- Financial support resources

Section 5: Health & Important Decisions

Why It Matters

Youth must learn to manage their healthcare and make informed decisions.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Do you know how to schedule a doctor appointment?
- Do you understand your health insurance?
- Who would you call if you had a medical emergency?

CASA Advocacy

Ensure youth have received information about:

- Healthcare coverage after age 18
- Power of Attorney, if applicable
- Healthcare decision-making
- Medical providers

Section 6: Jobs & Money

Why It Matters

Financial literacy supports long-term independence.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Have you had a job before?
- What jobs interest you?
- Do you know how to create a budget?
- Do you have a bank account?
- Has DCFS talked with you about checking your credit annually?

CASA Advocacy

Ask whether youth have:

- Received job readiness support
- Completed applications or resumes
- Participated in work experiences
- Learned budgeting basics

Section 7: Transportation

Why It Matters

Transportation affects employment, education, and independence.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Are you interested in getting a driver's license?
- Do you know what is required?
- What transportation options are available in your area?

CASA Advocacy

Ensure transportation planning is discussed before adulthood.

Section 8: Special Support & Benefits

Why It Matters

Some youth may qualify for ongoing benefits and services.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Have you been told about benefits you may qualify for?
- Do you understand what will happen after high school?

CASA Advocacy

Ask whether:

- Disability benefits have been discussed
- Survivor benefits have been explained
- Transition planning includes benefit continuation

Section 9: My Voice Matters

Why It Matters

Youth should participate in decisions affecting their lives.

CASA Discussion Questions

- Do you feel heard?
- Do you know you can attend court?
- Do you know how to raise concerns?

CASA Advocacy

Encourage youth participation and ensure their wishes are communicated to the court.

Section 10: Advocate Support

Volunteer Reminder

Ask youth:

- Do you feel supported by your CASA?
- Is there something you wish I understood better?
- Is there a goal you would like help advocating for?

Life Skills

CASA volunteers should inform youth about available TYS Programs with DCFS and CASA life skills program and encourage participation.

Red Flags for CASA Volunteers

Immediately follow up if a youth:

- Does not have basic identification documents
- Has no trusted adults identified
- Has no housing plan after 18
- Has not discussed education or employment goals
- Does not understand healthcare coverage
- Has no transportation plan
- Reports feeling unsupported or unheard
- Is unaware of available services or benefits

Court Report Considerations

Consider documenting:

- Progress made since last review
- Missing documents or services
- Transition planning participation
- Housing readiness
- Educational planning
- Employment preparation
- Support system development
- Youth concerns and wishes

You've Got This!

Supporting Youth One Step at a Time

Review plans regularly with youth •
Encourage open communication and
advocacy.

Thank you for advocating for youth.