THE BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

The Bridge to Independence (B2I) Program provides services & support to age 21 for young adults who were formerly in foster care, here's what you need to know:

Bridge to Independence Program (B2I)
Young adults, who live in Nebraska, who: had an abuse or neglect case and were in an out-of-home placement at age 19, were discharged to independent living, exited foster care to a guardianship or adoption at age 16 or older, or had a disrupted guardianship (that was filed as a 43-247(8)) at 16 or older, can receive:
- Medicaid coverage
- A monthly stipend
- Young adult-directed case management services

Extended Adoption & Extended Guardianship Programs
Young adults who entered into an adoption or guardianship agreement at age 16 or older can receive:
- Medicaid coverage
- Continued adoption or guardianship payments

Eligibility Requirements
Young adults must be doing at least one of the following to be eligible:
- Completing high school or an equivalent program (such as a GED)
- Enrolled at least part-time in college, community college, or a vocational program
- Employed at least 80 hours per month (about 20 hours a week)
- Participating in a program or activity to remove barriers to employment (such as an internship, volunteering, or working with a local career center)
- Unable to do any of those things because of a medical condition

What to expect in B2I
- Young adults must meet regularly with an Independence Coordinator. Independence Coordinators will help young adults identify and meet their individual goals. Goals are young adult-directed and services are designed to help young adults meet these goals.
- Attend court hearings at least once a year and case reviews twice a year.
- The program is voluntary so young adults can decide if they want to participate and can change their minds. If a young adult wants to leave the program they can also come back any time before turning 21.

Ready to sign up?
Find the application on the DHHS website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/b2i. Young adults must sign an agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to participate & receive services.
- For details about this, contact your caseworker, your guardian ad litem (GAL), your local DHHS office, or Nebraska Appleseed at 1-800-845-3746.
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**How does the B2I monthly stipend work?**
You can receive a monthly stipend of $760. If you are living in a supervised independent living setting, the stipend may come directly to the young adult. If you live in a foster home or group home, the stipend may continue to be provided to the foster family or group home. Decisions about how to handle the stipend in those cases are made on an individual basis.

**What housing options do I have in the B2I program?**
You will work with your Independence Coordinator to decide which of these options is best. Housing options for this program include:
- Foster family homes (relative or non-relative)
- Supervised independent living settings such as renting an apartment or house either alone or with a roommate, college dorm, living with relatives or friends, etc.
- If appropriate, a institutional or group home
- If you entered a guardianship or adoption agreement at 16 or older, you can choose B2I and decide to continue living with your former guardian or adoptive parent.

**How often do I meet with the Independence Coordinator or other people in my B2I case?**
Monthly face-to-face meetings with your Independence Coordinator are required. You must also attend two case reviews (including the Foster Care Review Office, your Independence Coordinator, and others you think should be there) and at least one court hearing (involving your Independence Coordinator, a judge, your attorney if you want one, and others you think should be there).

**I was in a foster home or group home through the juvenile justice system. Am I eligible?**
To be eligible you had to have an abuse or neglect case. If you were dually adjudicated (meaning you had both an abuse or neglect case and a juvenile justice case) you would be eligible for the program as long as you meet other eligibility requirements. Check with your caseworker, your GAL, or someone else at DHHS if you’re not sure about your case.

**I was guardianshiped or adopted on or after my 16th birthday, which program can I join?**
If you meet the eligibility requirements, you can choose to join the B2I program or the extended guardianship or extended adoption program. If you choose B2I, you receive Medicaid coverage, a monthly stipend, young adult-directed case management services, and will have at least one court hearing and two case reviews per year. If you choose to enter the extended guardianship or extended adoption program, you receive Medicaid coverage if eligible and continued guardianship or adoption payments.

**Can I be in the program if I am not living in Nebraska?**
The B2I program is for youth that were involved in Nebraska’s foster care system. You must continue to be a resident of Nebraska to be eligible for the program. But if you decide to attend school in another state, you can still be considered a resident of Nebraska. Or if you were placed in another state when you were in Nebraska foster care, you can remain in that state and be eligible for B2I.

**My foster care case was in a tribal court. Am I eligible?**
Yes, if you meet the other eligibility criteria, you can participate.

**My case was closed to independent living before I turned 19. Can I still sign up?**
You have to be between 19 and 21 to participate in the program, but it doesn’t matter how old you were when your case was closed to independent living.

**What if I am also receiving developmental disabilities services?**
If you meet the level of care for certain nursing facilities for persons with developmental disabilities you will not be eligible for the B2I program.

Questions? Contact Nebraska Appleseed at 1-800-845-3746