



Teen Parents in Care

Teen parents “in care” are young mothers and fathers who are placed by DHS in foster care, a mother/baby placement, or other placement.

What rights do I have as a teen parent in care?

- To physical and legal custody of your baby. Your child should not be found dependent just because you are in care.
- To parent your child.
- To live in the most family-like setting available.
- To visit with your child if they are not living with you, unless a court has ordered otherwise.
- To an attorney to represent you as a parent if DHS files a petition to have your baby found dependent.

Will my baby live with me?

Yes, if there is an appropriate placement available. All efforts should be made to find a placement for you and your baby together. Talk to your lawyer if you and your baby are not placed together.

What types of services can my child and I receive?

You should be placed with family if a family member’s home is available and approved. You should receive independent living services, parenting support, and assistance with getting child care.

How do I get child care?

DHS or CUA should help you apply for or provide you with child care for your child. Many teen parents will qualify for subsidized child care. To determine if you are eligible and find out where to apply, contact 1-877-4-PA-KIDS or 1-800-392-3131. If you are out of care and receiving TANF (welfare) or food stamps, check with your welfare caseworker to find out if you are eligible for child care assistance through your local welfare office.

What is child support and how do I apply for it?

Child support is money paid by parents who do not live with the child to support the care of the child. You can file for child support at your county’s domestic relations court (in Philadelphia, 1501 Arch Street, 8th Floor). If you are out of care and receiving TANF, the government can file for child support for you. But, you may receive only up to \$100 in "pass through" benefits (up to \$200 if you have more than one child). The rest goes to reimburse the state for the cost of your benefits.

Can I be asked to pay child support when I am in care?

YES. Just like teen parents have many of the rights of older parents, they also have some of the same responsibilities. You can be ordered to pay child support if you are in care, if you are a minor, or if you



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are still in high school. But, child support is calculated based on your income or your capacity to earn income, so if you fall into one of these categories and do not work or are unable to work, it is not likely that you will be ordered to pay support.

Staying in Care Past 18

How long can I stay under DHS care?

In many cases, you can stay in care until you are 21. You can do this if you came into the system before age 18 and if you are in what is called a “program of treatment or instruction.” If you stay in care, you might remain in your foster home or group home, or you might move to a supervised independent living (SIL) or transitional living placement (TLP). In Philadelphia, staying in care is called having a “board extension.”

Why would I want to stay in care past age 18?

If you stay in care or re-enter care, you can continue to receive services through DHS. This can help you get:

- A place to live
- Stability, support and guidance from staff
- Health insurance
- Access to supervised independent living and apartment programs
- Food, clothes and essentials
- An opportunity to finish high school or other schooling
- Involvement of the court and your advocate to make sure things are going ok

It is true that staying in care limits your freedom. Many 18 year olds want to be on their own and out of the system. Just think about it before you leave and make sure you have a plan – including a place to live and an income that will cover your expenses. Remember, you can change your mind and sign back into care later if you change your mind.

Get Help

- For information and referrals, call Juvenile Law Center at 215-625-0551 or visit their website at www.jlc.org; or call the CLS Family Advocacy Hotline at 215-981-3765.
- For legal assistance with child care, custody, and support, call Philadelphia Legal Assistance at (215) 981-3838.
- Call DHS if you don't know who your caseworker is: 215-683-4347.
- Call the court if you don't know who your lawyer is or when your next court date is: 215-686-4119.

