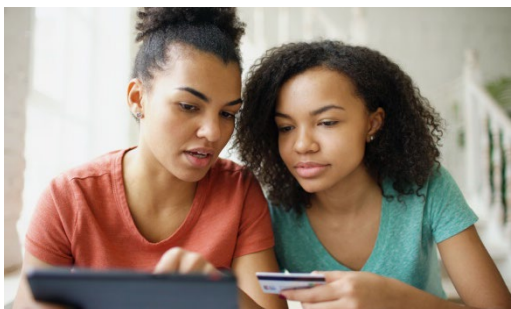




FAQs

Personal Allowance for Youth in Foster Care: What Resource Providers and Social Workers Need to Know

Providing a monthly personal allowance for youth in foster care (along with services and supports around financial literacy) can be an effective means of promoting normalcy for the youth and helping them develop important financial management skills. We can help youth prepare for life after foster care by working with them to manage their finances during their time with us in care. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) outline some key considerations and practice requirements of the program.



When can a youth in care start receiving an allowance?

Per [CFSA policy](#), at 15 years of age, youth start receiving an allowance, and they continue to receive the allowance until they exit foster care.¹

I'm a resource parent and I need to know how much a youth in my care receives.

Youth in family-based and congregate care settings are to receive a personal allowance of at least \$100 per month.

When should the youth expect to receive their allowance?

For family-based foster care, youth may receive their allowances in weekly installments, such that by the end of a given month, the full \$100 has been distributed to the youth. The resource parent can establish the schedule for distribution, but we recommend that they be paid on Fridays. Youth in congregate care facilities should receive their allowances according to the house rules of the facility. Allowances should be pro-rated for youth who enter into a placement in the middle of the month.

Are there activities or requirements that the youth must meet in order to earn the allowance?

Yes, there are. School-age youth must go to school, avoid new involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice system, comply with plans (such as probation plans) in place for them, respect household curfew, and refrain from using the money inappropriately or illegally. Moreover, there is an expectation that resource providers integrate the youth into their households and give them typical responsibilities that would promote normalcy and serve as a condition for receipt of the allowance. Resource providers must consult with the youth and the youth's social worker when developing the engagement and participation criteria, to be documented in the youth's case plan, with the goal of setting the youth up for success.

¹ <https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/program-youth-personal-allowance>

What if the youth is unable or unwilling to engage in these household activities?

Household engagement looks different for every youth, and his or her development and trauma history need to be taken into account when planning it. If typical household activities are unrealistic for the youth, then resource providers should work with the social worker, the team, and the youth to come up with a sensible plan that takes into account the youth's abilities and "meets them where they are" to provide room for meaningful engagement and an opportunity for him or her to experience the sense of reward that comes with receiving the allowance.

Do all allowance recipients have to open a Making Money Grow (MMG) account?

We strongly recommend that every youth in care age 15 or older open an [MMG account](#).² It's an excellent tool for resource providers to use to work with the youth and educate them about the basics of saving, personal budgeting and money management, and there is a dollar-for-dollar matching program that will allow youth in care to save up to \$12,000 by their 21st birthday. Youth in care are unlikely to have college saving plans, or savings accounts to access in times of financial need, and these accounts can be a safety net for youth after exiting care.

Is there an expectation that resource providers are to help youth manage their finances wisely, including the personal allowance?

Yes, we expect, and the policy states that resource providers are doing this with the youth in their care. It's important for providers and youth to discuss topics like personal budgeting, savings planning, and account balancing, which are all important personal finance activities. CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE) can provide access to financial literacy training and/or provide tools and resources to help resource providers with these activities.

Do resource providers need to track allowance distribution?

Resource providers are to maintain a distribution log with the date of each distribution, amount, and the youth's acknowledgment of receipt or withholding. This clear accounting can be helpful to resolve confusion or potential disputes that may occur. An allowance log is provided upon request.

If the youth isn't meeting the minimum requirements to receive an allowance, should the resource provider withhold it?

It is absolutely within reason for resource providers to withhold a disbursement if the youth hasn't met the basic requirements to receive it, including the agreed-upon household engagement activities. There is an expectation, however, that the resource provider be very clear with the youth and the assigned social worker as to exactly why it is being withheld. The resource provider should also give the youth an opportunity to "earn it back", so to speak if appropriate to the circumstances.

If, despite being given an opportunity, the youth is unable or unwilling to "earn back" the withheld portion of the allowance, what should the resource provider do with it?

The resource provider can deposit it into a traditional savings account for the youth or the MMG savings account, of which the matched portion is restricted and can only be withdrawn for eligible uses. If that is not an option, then resource providers should determine ways to spend the money on the youth such that they derive some benefit such as birthday gifts or family outings. This would not include, however, spending the withheld allowance on the youth's basic necessities. Resource providers are expected to attend to the youth's basic needs out of the monthly board payment.

If you have questions about **allowances for a particular youth** contact the youth's assigned social worker. For questions about the **Making Money Grow** program contact cfsa.oye@dc.gov or (202) 727-7500.

² <https://cfsa.dc.gov/service/youth-services-cfsa>