

The Informed Foster Youth Act of 2026

Senators Chuck Grassley and Ben Ray Luján
Co-chairs of the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires that states create a written case plan for a child placed in state care. This plan outlines the comprehensive approach that the state will take to care for a child placed in its custody. Federal law stipulates that youth exiting foster care are to be provided with their vital documents, yet foster youth report that they leave care and are not provided with these documents that are necessary for practical life purposes such as seeking employment, housing, drivers' education, and more. Additionally, foster youth report they are not aware that they are to be provided with these documents, that they are not involved in their case planning, and that they are unaware of their rights and/or services available to support them while in care.

The Informed Foster Youth Act modifies case plan requirements under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to ensure that foster youth, particularly those 14 years old and older, are informed of their rights, receive their vital documents, and are informed of the services available to them so they are best prepared as they transition to adulthood. Case plans are to be personalized and youth, beginning at age 14 and by the time they exit care are to be:

- Informed of the services available to them under the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.
- Informed of their eligibility for medical assistance under title XIX and on how to enroll.
- Provided an official copy of their birth certificate, social security card, driver's license or other state identification card (with the option for the state to retain safely).
- Provided documentation to prove the child is in foster care.
- Provided with a document of their rights, including staying safe and avoiding exploitation and to seek redress for a violation of their rights.
- Provided an annual credit report.

The Informed Foster Youth Act also ensures that health and education records are reviewed and updated at every placement of the child and foster parents or care providers are provided with these records.