



## Ideas for Advocates for Promoting Policies that Enable Young People in Foster Care to Obtain Driver's Licenses

- 1. LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ISSUE.** Conduct a landscape scan to understand your state's existing legislative and administrative policies pertaining to the ability of youth in foster care to obtain a driver's licenses. Gather as much data as available, including what you can learn from foster parents and youth. Here are some key issues to probe in a search:
  - What are the state's policies regarding which individuals/entities have authority to sign a youth's application for a driver's permit/license? What is the liability for these individuals/entities? Does the state's "reasonable and prudent parent" training address authority of foster parents/caregivers to sign/grant approval to youth to obtain a driver's permit/license?
  - What are the fees associated with driver's education and permits? And what are the state's policies regarding how various fees will be covered: DMV costs, fees associated with driver's education courses, and insurance costs?
  - What are the state's policies relating to information-sharing with youth about driver's education courses and/or becoming a driver? Do youth obtain information during case planning meetings? Does the youth's bill of rights mention information about how to enroll and/or pay for driver's education classes
  - What are the state's policies relating to youth's ability to access and/or pay for car insurance?
  - How many driver's licenses were issued by your state to teens? How many foster youth?
  - What entities/locations offer driver's education?
  - What do youth themselves have to say? Consider working with a youth group to administer a survey of current and former foster youth about their experiences in pursuing a driver's license.
- 2. IDENTIFY THE GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES.** Based on your assessment of existing policy, what are the biggest barriers in your state? What type of policy change is feasible: administrative, legislative? Are there policy wins in other states that you can leverage to advance your agenda? Please call on SPARC to consult on policy development and leveraging the Going Places campaign to advance your goals.
- 3. PREPARE YOUR MESSAGING.** SPARC's campaign toolkit offers a range of resources, including communications tools, that can be utilized to support your advocacy efforts. SPARC may also be able to help you tailor materials.





4. **MOBILIZE YOUR ALLIES.** Organize a briefing for colleagues and/or coalition partners to share information about your state’s existing policies and to invite others to join in your efforts. SPARC can help you prepare a meeting agenda, identify guest speakers, or provide other support. Draw on the materials in the Going Places campaign toolkit for meeting handouts, such as the infographic or summary of policy wins in other states.
5. **ENGAGE YOUR AGENCY LEADERS.** Many states have policies on the books regarding driver’s licenses for youth in care that pre-date the passage of the “normalcy” provisions of the Strengthening Families Act. For all states, the passage of the Strengthening Families Act of 2014 put a new level of focus and expectation on state child welfare agencies to improve opportunities for normalcy for youth in care. The topic of driver’s licenses fits squarely into the “normalcy” movement and it is a great time to ask your agency colleagues to dialogue with you on this topic. Consider initiating a meeting with your agency staff to share your interest in the issue and seek clarification of existing policies. Explore the agency’s interest/ability to make improvements through administrative policy. Invite young people in foster care to join you for this meeting so they can share first-hand the importance of a driver’s license in their lives.
6. **INVITE SUPPORTIVE LEGISLATORS TO GET INVOLVED.** One of the advantages of this issue is that it is easily understood by all. In addition to engaging existing legislative champions, it may be a good time to reach out to prospective champions to talk about the opportunities and challenges for youth in your state. Highlight specific barriers in state policy and offer ideas about how to address these barrier, either legislatively or through agency policy. Explore possibility of the legislature holding a hearing on the topic.
7. **AIM HIGH.** Consider making a request to meet with the governor’s office to share information about the issue and ask for help in addressing barriers. Ask if the governor’s office would help convene a cross-sector meeting that would include representatives from child welfare, the transportation department, and the department of insurance. Work to include youth and foster parents at such a meeting.
8. **MAKE IT REAL.** Explore ways to involve current or former foster youth, as well as foster parents, in your efforts. Consider ways to engage them early and maintain their involvement throughout your advocacy effort. You may initiative a survey of youth or foster parents to gather initial input and hold a meeting to share findings. SPARC can offer consultation or technical assistance in engaging these groups.

