

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Get That Job

Whether you have left foster care or are staying in until you are 21 years old, you will want to maximize the opportunity to gain valuable work experience. As you begin to make choices about your career, it will be important to “build your resume” to show future employers your strengths and potential, and to differentiate you from the other resumes they receive.

Small things like including work experience, whether a job is paid or a volunteer opportunity, long-term or short-term, can make the difference between landing your dream job or being tossed into the shredding bin. While there are lots of supports and funding available to you under both extended foster care and ILP, none of it is going to pay all your expenses. That is why work experience and a full or part-time job is so important.



Where do I start to look for work experience or a job?

A good place to start looking is at youth employment programs that focus on ages 16 to 24 years old. Funded by the local Workforce Investment Boards, these centers go by many names, such as YouthSources, Youth Opportunity Movement (YO/YOM), America’s Job Centers to name a few. They offer workforce readiness/job skills training, academic and vocational programs, computer training and tutoring, paid internships and jobs. They also offer short-term summer employment, which is a great way to show a future employer that you are “work ready.” To find a location near you, download the B4UGo smartphone app (kids-alliance.org/app) for a listing of centers near you.

If you are over 24 years old, WorkSource/America’s Jobs Centers can provide skills assessments, technology training and job placement. Many of the centers also have personalized job counseling. To find a WorkSource near you, go to toworksourcecalifornia.com or call 888.226.6300. There are also a number of independent workforce readiness, job shadowing and internships programs listed in the B4UGo app that specialize in training and placing foster youth with private employers.

Do I need a work permit?

Maybe. If you are under 18 and have not graduated from high school, then you need a work permit issued from your school to be able to work. If you have already graduated high school, passed the GED, or are older than 18, then you do not have to get a work permit. A work permit allows you to work, but puts some limits on the employer. For example, permits may limit the number of hours you are allowed to work each week.

When school is not in session, say during the summer, you can go to a YouthSource center to get a work permit. If you have more questions about how to get a work permit, contact your counselor at school or visit www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/we/wpfaq.asp#Q1.

What should I do before I apply for a job?

Most employers will either ask you to fill out an application and/or provide a resume. A resume is usually a page-long glance at your skills, work experience and education.



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While it is a quick look at your qualifications, employers also use resumes to screen out candidates and narrow down the ones that they are most interested in. To ensure you pass through this screen and get to an interview, you should spend time perfecting your resume. Make sure you focus on what differentiates you, including your skills, training and work experience (even as a volunteer). You might want to include how your experience in foster care has helped you develop skills, such as resilience, ability to adapt quickly and get along with new and different people. Do several drafts, have others read and edit it, and line up references who can vouch for your skills, work experience and character.

There are a lot of “how tos” online without the need for you to pay for resume assistance. A good resource is on About.com – [jobsearch about.com/od/resumes/u/resumes_and_letters.htm](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumes/u/resumes_and_letters.htm). If you are working on a computer with Microsoft Word, there are several fillable templates in the Help section.

How can I be sure I have a good interview?

Once you submit a resume and are called for an interview, you have a chance to show the employer exactly why they should hire you. You want to be sure you put your best foot forward.

Here are some tips:

- Be on time! It is better to be early than late. If your interview is somewhere far or in an area you aren't familiar with, research how long it's going to take you to get there. Remember that during the week, traffic may be much different than on weekends.
- Bring a copy of your resume. Even if you mailed or emailed your resume to the prospective employer, you should bring a copy on nice paper. This shows that you are prepared.
- Do some research about the company. Make sure you know what the company is about; take some time to do an internet search. This shows them that you are actually interested in working for their company or organization. People who care about where they work are likely to be more committed, which is appealing to a company.

How do I dress for a job interview and where can I get interview clothes?

It is important that you look clean, put-together and organized for a job interview. Don't show up in gym shorts and shoes even if you are filling out an application for a fast food restaurant! Jeans and t-shirts are usually not appropriate interview attire. Dress slacks/skirt, a clean shirt with a collar and clean closed-toed shoes will do the trick! If you do not have dress clothes for an interview, resources exist to give you appropriate interview clothes for free or at a low cost.

- Dress for Success — dressforsuccess.org
- Goodwill — goodwill.org
- Out of the Closet — outofthecloset.org/locations
- American Rag — americanrecycledclothing.com
- Crossroads Trading Co. — crossroadstrading.com

For more information, visit kids-alliance.org or clccal.org.



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