



JIM CASEY YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is a major national effort to help youth in foster care make successful transitions to adulthood. With support from the Initiative, Michigan is promoting a new tool for youth leaving care in the Detroit and Traverse City areas.

The tool is called the Opportunity Passport™. The Opportunity Passport™ is a tool designed to organize resources to create opportunities – financial, educational, vocational, health care, entrepreneurial, and recreational opportunities - for young people leaving care.

Youth are eligible for the Opportunity Passport™ if:

1. They are between the ages of 14 and 23;
2. They were in foster care or relative placement at some time after their 14th birthday; and
3. They live in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee or Wexford counties.

An important part of improving the lives of youth who have been in foster care is to help them earn and save money, both for the short term and the long term. The Opportunity Passport™ is designed to do that. In order to enroll in the Opportunity Passport™ each youth must complete a financial literacy class (approximately 8 hours), complete an on-line survey, and most importantly commit to saving money on a regular basis. We'll work with each youth to decide how much money the youth is realistically able to save.

The components of the Opportunity Passport™ are:

1. An individual development savings account (IDA) that will be matched one dollar for each dollar the youth saves, up to \$1000 per year;
2. A debit (checking) account with an ATM card and no paper checks so the youth can't become overdrawn and develop bad credit;
3. "Door Openers" created by the community.

The debit account is the youth's to use however he or she wants. In order to receive the match, the IDA savings account can only be used for:

1. housing down payment or rent deposit
2. medical, dental or other health costs
3. insurance (renter's, health, auto)
4. education or training costs
5. car purchase and licensing
6. microenterprise
7. investments (stocks, 401(k) or IRAs)

In addition to the Opportunity Passport™ the Initiative has an active Youth Board. They meet monthly and are recruiting additional members. This requires a commitment to attend monthly meetings. Youth who are not on the Youth Board are still invited to enroll in the Opportunity Passport™.

If you have questions or to sign up for the Initiative please contact:

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