



Alumni Services Program (ASP)

Empowering and guiding young adults towards successful independence

Up to 25,000 young adults **age out** of the foster care system each year with no economic or familial support.

By age 24, **up to 30%** of foster care alumni **have been homeless** for at least one night since exiting foster care.

In Illinois, **only 50%** of youth who have aged out of the foster care system **are employed** at the age of 24.

The Alumni Services Program (ASP) is an innovative program that offers additional support to young adults who have emancipated from the child welfare system.

ASP is a voluntary program that provides short-term case management services utilizing a team of professionals that include a case manager, a housing coordinator, employment specialist, and an emancipation specialist. Through extensive collaboration, the young adult becomes an active participant working towards identifying their needs. ASP is able to assist young adults in securing safe and affordable housing, preparing for and gaining stable employment, accessing dependable child care, addressing emotional issues through counseling, support and referrals for substance abuse treatment, and life skills learning.

HOW ASP WORKS

Often times, young adults seek the assistance of previous case workers and other providers when they encounter life-altering events or realize that independent living requires more than they were prepared to handle. Thus, previous providers can refer the young adult to the Alumni Services Program. The identified young adult will be contacted by the ASP coordinator to confirm their interest in ASP services. Also, the young adult can contact the Alumni Services Program coordinator directly and express interest in participating in the Alumni Services Program.

PARTICIPATING IN ASP

Once the young adult completes intake, they will work together with the ASP Coordinator to create a service plan that addresses all of their needs. Young Adults are highly encouraged to be active participants in this process and throughout their time in the program.

This young adult-centered approach not only enhances their experience with the program but also inspires the young adult to take responsibility and accountability for their success in the program.

ASP services include, but are not limited to the following:

- Housing Assistance
- Employment Assistance
- Educational Assistance
- Therapeutic referrals (individual, couple, and family)
- Life Skills Classes
- Parenting Skills Classes

During their time in the program, young adults will work directly with their case manager and other ASP support staff to learn how to identify and access community resources. These resources are an integral part of the Alumni Services Program.



OVERCOMING THE MAIN BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL INDEPENDENCE

The success of the Alumni Services Program lies in the professional support that is provided to the young adults.

Case Management

Case management is the cornerstone of the Alumni Services Program. Working side by side with their case manager, young adults will complete assessment and create a service plan. The case manager will also help to guide the young adults' progress through the program by providing referrals to either interagency or community resources.

Employment Assistance

Working one-on-one with the ASP Employment Specialist, young adults will receive assistance preparing both their cover letter and resume. They may also participate in mock interviews or Job Club workshops where they will work side-by-side with peers learning the job skills and attributes potential employers seek out. Furthermore, not only will young adults be prepared for employment, they will also be provided with job leads through community connections.

Housing Assistance

Young adults will work with the Housing Coordinator to better understand the rental process. The Housing Coordinator will require young adults to complete

a short curriculum designed to prepare young adults to be knowledgeable of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Following completion, the Housing Coordinator will then provide links to various suitable housing opportunities to meet their needs.

Life Skills Classes

A wide range of life skill classes are offered to meet the needs of each young adult. With a focus on one's overall wellness, each class addresses one of the following needs: Financial Stability, Healthy Living and Well-Being, Achieving Academic and Employment Goals, and Learning Effective Parenting Styles.

Mental Health

Young adults have the opportunity to access counseling resources to address the psychosocial barriers that may be impacting their independence. Young adults will be offered the opportunity to access interagency counseling through UCAN's Clinical Counseling Services department or will be provided with referrals to community agencies offering similar services.

Emancipation Specialist

The Emancipation Specialist is a unique resource available to the young adults seeking support through Alumni Services. The Emancipation Specialist functions as a mentor, offering young adults insight in the struggle they are experiencing. Working one-on-one

with the young adults, the Emancipation Specialist will provide extensive community linkages, support life skill enhancement, and support as they navigate the path to self-sufficiency.

ABOUT UCAN

For over a century, UCAN has served as a safe haven for youth and families at-risk. UCAN serves over 10,000 youth each year through a variety of programs aimed at healing trauma, educating youth and families and preventing violence.

UCAN is accredited through the Council on Accreditation.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN ASP

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