



*Ensure you have all of your personal documents BEFORE you leave care (it's much harder to get some of these items after you exit the system)*

**GET STATE-ISSUED OFFICIAL PHOTO ID**

Photo identification is required on many occasions. Obtaining state-issued photo ID before you leave foster care (it's something your caseworker should help you do).

**DOCUMENTATION THAT YOU WERE IN FOSTER CARE**

This may become important in qualifying for benefits, including financial aid for higher education.

- OBTAIN AN ORIGINAL COPY OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY CARD**  
Information about obtaining a replacement card can be obtained from [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). Understand the importance of guarding their social security number to protect against identity theft.
- OBTAIN A COPY OF YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE**  
It should be a certified, or official, copy. Learn how to replace it should it become lost.
- CITIZENSHIP DOCUMENTS**
- If you were born in a country other than the United States, make sure you have a copy of all of your citizenship papers and understand completely what your citizenship rights and responsibilities are.
- CHECK YOUR CREDIT**  
Ask to have a credit report run based on your social security number prior to leaving foster care. It is not unusual for young people from foster care to discover their credit has been damaged when relatives have "borrowed" their identity to turn on utilities or get credit cards.

**ESTABLISH A PERSONAL FILING SYSTEM**  
Young people should establish a method of keeping track of important documents. Methods could include a designated box, an FYI Binder (visit [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org) for information), a 3-ring notebook, a filing cabinet or a file-size expandable envelope. Understand the importance of keeping personal documents safe and secure.

**REGISTER TO VOTE**  
Starting at 18, register to become active in local, state and national elections and issues.

**REGISTER FOR SELECTIVE SERVICE**  
If you are a male age 18 to 26, register for the selective service.