

Youth Opportunity Grants Program

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN



Application Process



About the Youth Opportunity Grants Program

Thank you for your interest in the Youth Opportunity Grants project! Ready for Life is proud to partner with the City of St. Petersburg to administer this transformative project that is designed to support former foster youth as they transition into adulthood. The Youth Opportunity Grants project provides monthly cash disbursements directly to young adults who meet the eligibility criteria outlined below. These monthly cash disbursements are intended to be an economic floor, to supplement (rather than replace) existing income and safety net. Participants will receive \$500 per month, for a total of 12 months.

This initiative aims to fill the gap for those who are not currently engaged in formal aftercare services. In addition to financial support, participants will have access to direct services, including counseling, parenting programs, and life skills development. These services are tailored to meet individual needs and assist in maintaining stability during this critical transition period. The Youth Opportunity Grants project intends to have an upstream impact in these young adults' lives by providing this economic floor and opportunities for wraparound support.

Eligible applicants:

- Are 18 - 27 years old
- Were in out-of-home care between the ages of 14 and 18, and were never reunified (i.e., removed from their parent and placed in foster care, group care, relative placement, or non- relative placement)
- Currently live in Pinellas County and either live, work, or go to school in St. Petersburg
[Map of boundaries](#)
- Are not currently receiving formal support services through the child welfare system (e.g., Extended Foster Care, Post-Secondary Education Services and Support (PESS), or Aftercare)

The following information outlines each step of the application process and how it all works. Ready for Life is here to help! Please contact us with any questions you may have about the application process at (727) 954-3989.

Youth Opportunity Grants Program Application Process

Step 1: Submit Application

The applicant submits their [online application](#) for the Youth Opportunity Grants during the open application period.

Step 2: Eligibility Determination & Verification Documents

Once the application is received, our Program Coordinator will review it within three to five business days. This review includes an initial FSFN check to confirm the individual's date of birth, that the applicant was in out-of-home care, determine how permanency was achieved, and confirm that the individual is not currently enrolled in formal Aftercare services. This review also includes double-checking that all eligibility criteria, as reported on the application, do meet the 4 minimum eligibility criteria. Once the applicant's eligibility is confirmed, the Program Coordinator will place the application into the pool of eligible applicants that will move on to the selection process.

During this period of time, the applicant will be required to submit verification of their tie(s) to St. Pete that they indicated on the application: proof of residency within St. Pete city limits; OR proof of residency within Pinellas County AND proof of employment in St. Pete; OR proof of residency within Pinellas County AND proof of attending school in St. Pete. The Program Coordinator will assist the applicant in submitting these documents before the selection process takes place.

NOTE: Eligibility does not guarantee enrollment in the program as there are a limited number of grants and recipients scheduled over two years. If the applicant is determined to be eligible but not enrolled in a cohort, they may have an opportunity to be re-screened for a future cohort.

Step 3: Selection Process

Once all eligible applicants are placed in the applicant pool, the program team will begin the selection process. If Ready for Life receives more applications than they can accept into each cohort, the program team will use a prioritization system that aligns with the City of St. Petersburg's program requirements. The program team will then use a lottery system to fill the remaining slots. There are 88 total slots open for the program, with approximately 28 to 30 people in each of the 3 cohorts.

Each applicant will be notified about the outcome of the selection process whether they were selected for the cohort or not.

If an applicant is not eligible for the Youth Opportunity Grants or not selected to enroll in the program, they can schedule an appointment with a Ready for Life Programs Specialist to gain more information about other resources and support services tailored to their needs.

Step 4: Onboarding Process

After being notified of their selection to be enrolled in the program, the program participant will complete the onboarding process to get set up for the first disbursement of funds.

The participant will complete financial benefits counseling with program staff. Benefits counseling is completed to protect the applicant's existing benefits they receive, if any. Participants will walk through their existing benefits with the Program Coordinator, and will make an informed decision about their participation in the program if there is a concern that additional dollars coming in each month will make them ineligible for any existing benefits they receive. Please note that while these youth opportunity grant funds are considered a gift and not income, each benefits program has different rules about what should be reported as income, and Ready for Life cannot give legal advice.

During the onboarding process, the participant will be offered an optional wellness assessment conducted by Ready for Life's therapist. This process will allow the participant to identify any needs they may have and would like assistance with by program staff. These services may include assistance with housing, employment, life skills development, counseling, mentorship programs, parenting programs, etc. – these services are offered at no cost to the program participant.

The final part of the onboarding process includes the participant filling out the prepaid card form. The prepaid card is how participants will receive the monthly \$500 payment. The Program Coordinator will assist participants in getting this completed successfully.

Due to federal regulation in providing a prepaid card, participants must supply the following personally identifiable information: legal name, date of birth, social security number, U.S. physical residential address, email address, telephone number. There is no credit check and no impact on the participant's credit history.

The card will be mailed within 10 days and will be activated upon receipt. This Master Card is used just like cash or any debit card. Each participant will review and sign a cardholder agreement that details their responsibilities and what process to follow in the event of a lost or stolen card.

Information will be shared with the Director of Finance within three business days to coordinate the monthly payment disbursement.

Step 5: Cohort Launch

Once the cohort of participants launches, each participant will receive \$500 a month, for a period of 12 months. The funds will automatically be deposited into the participant's prepaid card on or within two business days of the 15th of each month once the cohort launches. Every effort will be made to have the funds deposited on or before the 15th monthly, but the banks and federal holidays may impact the deposit.

Over the 12-month period that participants receive the \$500 monthly disbursements, they will be offered additional financial incentives to engage in the program evaluation process, including answering surveys and attending focus group interviews.

Participants will receive a participant handbook for more information about each step of the program and what to expect during their participation.

