

OVERVIEW

Building and maintaining credit is vital to a successful transition from foster care. Information on credit reports is used to evaluate applications for credit, employment, insurance, and renting a home. To ensure youth have accurate and up-to-date credit history, credit reports must be requested annually for all youth ages 14-21.

Most youth do not have a credit report because they cannot legally apply for credit on their own. Therefore, if a credit report exists for a person younger than 18, it may be due to error, fraud, or identity theft.

LEGAL

In 2011, the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act, PL 112-34, required that each child age 16 and older in foster care receive a copy of any consumer credit report annually until discharged from foster care, and must be assisted in interpreting the credit report and resolving any inaccuracies.

In 2014, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, PL 113-183, decreased the minimum age for youth to receive a copy of any consumer credit report to 14 years old.

YOUTH 14-17 YEARS OLD

Youth Currently in Care

A credit report will be automatically requested from each of the three nationwide consumer credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), on the youth's behalf, within 60 calendar days of the youth's 14th birthday.

Youth Entering Care after Age 14

A credit report will be automatically requested from each of the three nationwide consumer credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), on the youth's behalf, within 60 calendar days of entering care.

Credit Reporting Technician Responsibilities

Credit reports will be requested by the Credit Reporting Technician (CRT). Most youth will not have a credit report returned because

they cannot legally apply for credit on their own. If a credit report is returned, the CRT will forward it to the caseworker to review with the youth. If a credit report is not returned, the CRT will send a letter to the caseworker confirming that no such report exists.

The CRT is located in central office at the following address:

Credit Reporting Technician
Adoption Subsidy Office
235 S. Grand Ave, Ste. 612
Lansing, MI 48909
DHS-CreditReporting@michigan.gov

Caseworker Responsibilities

If a credit report is returned, the caseworker must review the findings with the youth and assist him/her in identifying and addressing any discrepancies in the report; see Resources in this item. The report must be uploaded in MISACWIS and the original report must be given to the youth.

If a letter confirming that a credit report does not exist is returned, the caseworker must upload the letter in MISACWIS and the original letter must be given to the youth.

Annual Requests

Credit reports will continue to be requested within 364 days from the original request, until the youth is discharged from foster care or turns 18 years old.

YOUTH 18 YEARS AND OLDER

Youth 18 years old and older must be assisted with obtaining his/her credit report from each of the three nationwide consumer credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), annually. A free consumer credit report may be requested online from the three credit reporting agencies by going to www.annualcreditreport.com.

The caseworker's responsibilities include:

- Assisting the youth in completing the online verification form, if necessary.

- Reviewing the findings with the youth and assisting him/her in identifying and addressing any discrepancies in the report; see Resources in this item.
- Uploading a copy of the report in MiSACWIS.

Right to Object

Youth over age 18 may object in writing to requesting his or her credit report. If the youth provides the caseworker a written request to opt-out, the caseworker must upload a copy of the letter in MiSACWIS.

Note: The agency will not be considered out of compliance if it fails to obtain a credit report due to the youth's written objection.

Time Frames and Annual Requests

Youth who enter foster care after age 18 must have a credit report requested or have a written objection uploaded in MiSACWIS, within 90 calendar days of entering care.

Credit reports must continue to be requested within 364 days from the original request, until the youth is discharged from foster care.

RESOURCES

The [Identity Theft Tip-Sheet for Child Welfare Staff](#) is available for caseworkers to use when assisting youth with issues involving their credit reports.