

# Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative (GYOI)



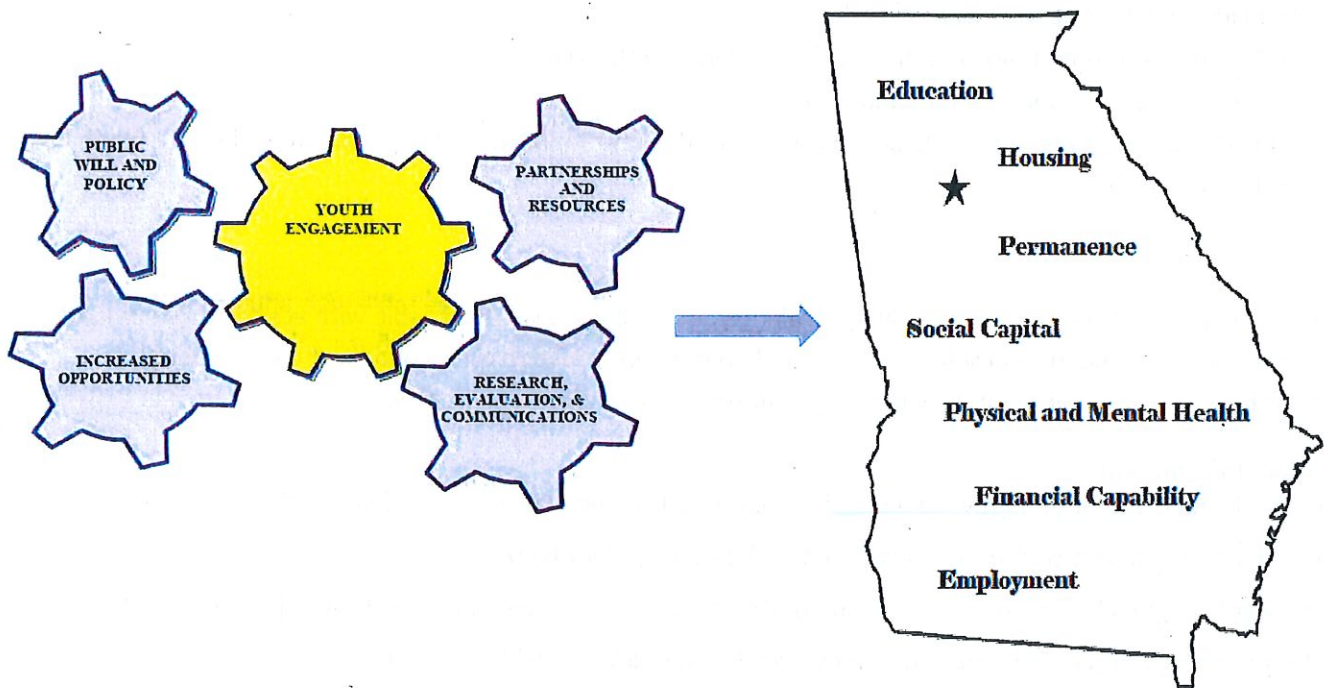
The Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative (GYOI) is part of the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. **Our vision is that all young people leaving foster care will make successful transitions to adulthood.** GYOI works as a public-private and youth-adult partnership to improve outcomes in the areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital and financial capability. EmpowerMent, a part of GYOI, helps guide what areas and regions need focus and help or “door openers.” Started as a Jim Casey pilot site in 2002 as the Metro Atlanta Youth Opportunities Initiative, GYOI is expanding state wide and is housed at the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC). MAAC is a collaboration between nine agencies who network together to provide placement and support for at-risk youth.

In addition to EmpowerMent, two key components of GYOI are the Community Partnership Group and the Individual Development Account. **The Community Partnership Group is a public/private, youth/adult partnership group working on a state-wide level to leverage resources and community support for youth transitioning from care.** The group creates door openers to help youth successfully transition. Door openers are connections and relationships that can help youth successfully transition. This could mean health care, insurance; education in making large purchases, access to needed items, etc.

The Individual Development Accounts are for ILP eligible youth ages 14-21. Participants receive approximately nine hours of financial education training and are able to have their savings matched towards the purchase of an asset such as needs for education, housing, transportation and employment. Participants may match multiple times for a lifetime match of \$1,000.

## Strategies to Outcomes

GYOI utilizes five core strategies to affect seven core outcomes, with Youth Engagement (EmpowerMent/Youth Voice) being the driving strategy.



# Georgia EmpowerMENT



EmpowerMENT is an initiative founded by former and current foster youth in Georgia who are working with community leaders to change the foster care system. EmpowerMENT is comprised of regional leadership boards at different stages of development, which the youth chose to call “tribes” to represent a close network of support. Each tribe focuses on specific issues deemed most relevant within their region. **EmpowerMENT’s motto is “Nothing about us without us,” and our primary goal is to equip youth to be proactive in shaping both their present and their future.** We would love to see you at our next EmpowerMENT event!

## EmpowerMENT’s priorities as identified by young people:

- Improved educational stability, learning opportunities, and access to services
- Continued monitoring of access to Medicaid benefits up to 26th birthday
- Improved access and support to obtain drivers’ license, statewide and driver’s insurance
- Continued efforts to improve relationships with case manager
- Monitoring of implementation of 2013 Juvenile Justice Reform legislation
- Monitoring of implementation of CB 21 policy and practice

## Five ways adult supporters can get involved

- GET YOUTH INVOLVED
- Help identify door openers youth need
- Link concerned community member, or “champions,” with GYOI
- Tell people about EmpowerMENT and GYOI
- Educate others on the unique challenges facing youth transitioning from foster care and advocate for change and better systems.

We would love to hear from you and are always seeking youth willing to sit at the table with adults and community leaders to discuss these needs and solutions. You can find more information on Facebook, at [www.gyoi.org](http://www.gyoi.org), [www.georgiaempowerment.org](http://www.georgiaempowerment.org), or by contacting us at the contact information below.

### Key Contact Information

Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative - Victoria Salzman | [vsalzman@maac4kids.org](mailto:vsalzman@maac4kids.org) | 404-493-2966

EmpowerMENT - Sarah Bess Hudson | [shudson@maac4kids.org](mailto:shudson@maac4kids.org) | 404-880-9323

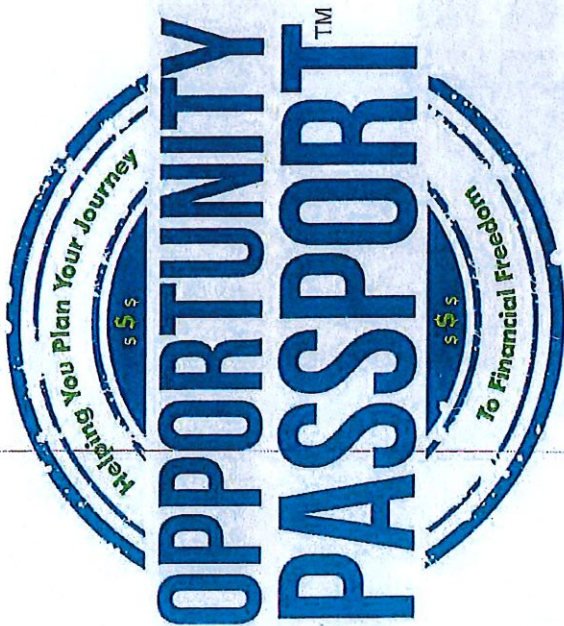
EmpowerMENT Regional Development - Antoinette Rucker | [arucker@maac4kids.org](mailto:arucker@maac4kids.org) | 404-880-9323

Courts Improvement/ EmpowerMENT - Anthony Stover | [astover@maac4kids.org](mailto:astover@maac4kids.org) | 404-933-2042

Individual Development Accounts/Opportunity Passport - Yatecca Lofton | [ylofton@maac4kids.org](mailto:ylofton@maac4kids.org) | 678-719-2496

Public Will & Policy - Shaquita Ogletree | [sogletree@maac4kids.org](mailto:sogletree@maac4kids.org) | 404-663-6406

Youth Support - Priscilla Harris | [pharris@maac4kids.org](mailto:pharris@maac4kids.org) | 404-880-9323



### What is Opportunity Passport™?

Opportunity Passport™ is a matched savings account program exclusively for young people ages 14-26 who are currently in foster care or who have experienced foster care at a previous time in their lives.

### Why should I participate in the Opportunity Passport™ program?

If you are enrolled in Opportunity Passport™, you will have the opportunity to earn a \$1-for-\$1 match for things like a car, rent, school, healthcare, etc.

### How do I get enrolled in the Opportunity Passport™ program?

Contact Dyonne Miles the Opportunity Passport™ Program Coordinator, to receive answers to any questions you may have and to become enrolled in Opportunity Passport™. Dyonne's contact number is 404.880.9323 and her email is [ida@maac4kids.org](mailto:ida@maac4kids.org).

**GA/R/ISE**  
Independent Living Program

## STEPS TO ENROLL

1. Complete the financial literacy training.
2. Open your savings account after the training.
3. Complete the enrollment application.
4. Turn in the enrollment application to the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator.
5. Once your application has been processed, you will receive a survey to complete.
6. Notify the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator that you have completed your survey.
7. You will get paid \$155 in seed money.
8. Save your money and keep your contact info current with the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator.

## STEPS TO MATCH OUT

1. Complete all Opportunity Passport™ Enrollment steps.
2. Notify the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator that you would like to match.
3. Turn in the match form & documents on the match checklist provided by the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator under your match category.
4. Once all necessary documents are received & the match form has been processed, a check will be mailed to the vendor as soon as possible.



The Opportunity Passport™ program, also known as the Individual Development Account (IDA) is a matched savings account exclusively for young people ages 14-26 who are in foster care or who have experienced foster care after the age of 14. After enrolling in a free financial literacy training program, youth can apply to participate in the matched savings program, where asset purchases up to \$3000 are matched dollar-for-dollar!

**START NOW!**



APPLY for ENROLLMENT & TAKE a SURVEY

OPEN SAVINGS ACCOUNT

COMPLETE 6.5 HOURS of FREE TRAINING

Trainings Held Monthly...

SIGN UP FOR A TRAINING

You're on your way! to a bright financial future

**"DREAM BIG!"**  
Domion Program Participant

SAVE FOR ASSETS...

\* The Opportunity Passport™ will match up to \$3000 in asset costs per participant. Match requests can be made multiple times up to the lifetime match of \$3000 for specific assets. In order to make a match request, the youth must first contact the Opportunity Coordinator, turn in a match form, and turn in supporting documentation for the specific match. Once the match form and all of the supporting documentation has been received and processed, the match payment will be sent directly to the vendor (person/place where youth is purchasing the asset from).

- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Investments
- Micro-Enterprise
- Transportation
- Credit Building

CONTACT coordinator when ready to match



Keep SAVINGS!



**READY TO BEGIN?**

**CONTACT**  
Dyonne Miles  
Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator  
idac@mac4kids.org  
404.880.9323

Note: An asset is something that has monetary value and will positively benefit your life.



# Department of Driver Services 375-3-1-.34: Applications of Minors



## Access to State IDs, Instruction Permit & Driver's License for Youth

DDS' "Signature on Application for Minor" rule will assist with the access to a state ID or driver's license for young people in foster care by creating new provisions to allow adults who work with young people to assist them in obtaining their state ID and work towards their driver's permit and license.

### Who is a Responsible Adult?



A "responsible adult" is an individual that is eighteen (18) years of age or older, competent to verify the application, and has personal knowledge of the applicant. Such as:

1. DFCS or DJJ Employee
2. Private foster care agency or group home employee
3. A foster parent with private agency or group home
4. Designated official for private agency or group home

O.C.G.A. 49-5-3

### DDS Customer Service Center: What to Do?

At the Customer Service Center (CSC), the responsible adult will (1) sign a Responsible Adult affidavit and include the relationship to the young person, (2) provide a state ID or letter from state agency to verify your identity AND (3) submit paperwork such as school documents, driver's license or identification card.

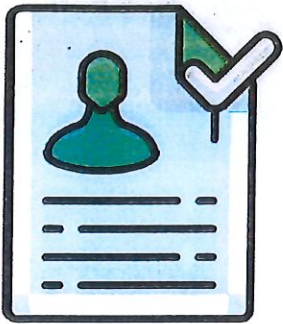


# Benefits for Young People

01

## Normalcy

Normalcy for young people in foster care means the ability to participate in age-appropriate activities, like obtaining a state ID and driver's license. One youth stated: "we want to experience the same things that other teens do."



## Economic Opportunities

Young people in foster care have the opportunity to participate in *TeenWork*, a youth development program for teens who work during the summer and holiday breaks. Now with access to a state ID, young people can apply for *TeenWork* and other employment opportunities in Georgia.

02

03

## Financial Freedom for Young People

Opportunity Passport™, also referred to as the Individual Development Account (IDA), is a matched savings account program for young people ages 14-26 who are in foster care or who have experienced 1 day in foster care. Now young people can use their state ID to open up a savings account and begin to plan their journey to financial freedom. For more information, email [ida@maac4kids.org](mailto:ida@maac4kids.org).





# Opportunity Passport™ FAQs

Opportunity Passport™ also known as IDA is a savings program for young people ages 14-26 who have spent at least one day in foster care in Georgia. Once youth complete the enrollment process, they are eligible to have asset purchases matched up to \$3000 after they have saved half the total asset costs, turn in match the form, and appropriate documentation from the checklist.

## **1. What can participants save for?**

- Home ownership down payments, rent deposits, (some) credit building efforts, tuition and/or books costs that are not covered by ILP or financial aid, car payment (s), car insurance, car registration fees, medical bills, funds needed to start your own business. Youth need to contact the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator when youth are ready to match and for a full list of covered match options.

## **2. Can you explain the enrollment process?**

- Prior to matching, a young person has to complete several steps to become enrolled into the IDA program. The first step is for the young person to attend the 6.5 hour financial literacy class. The next step is for the young person to open a savings account. The next steps is to complete an IDA application for enrollment. Once the application is tuned into me and I process, which takes me from 24-72 hours, I will send them a link to complete a survey. Upon completing the IDA survey, the youth needs to notify me. The youth are enrolled and receive a check for \$155 in their accounts for completing the enrollment steps. To remain active, youth must also continue to save, maintain current contact information with the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator, and continue to take the required surveys every April and October.

## **3. I attended the training but I never received the \$155 in seed money. Or I opened my savings account after I was trained but I never received the seed money.**

- Sometimes youth think because they have completed one or two steps within the enrollment process, they are done and should expect the \$155 seed money. This not the case as there are several steps involved in the enrollment process and youth must complete each of them before becoming fully enrolled. The \$155 is not deposited in the savings account until after all steps are completed. Please contact the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator to see what additional steps need to be completed in order to become fully enrolled.

## **4. Can you explain the match process?**

- The matching process is a separate process that begins once a young person completes enrollment steps. The young person initiates the match process by contacting the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator. Youth will be provided the match form and checklist. Once we get the match form and all documents under the desired match category back, we send the check to the vendor (person or business from which the young person is purchasing the asset). We do not cut checks to the young person or deposit the funds in their accounts.

## **5. Is this free money?**

- No, youth must save their money in order to cover half the cost of their asset. This is resource available to youth who have spent time in care to assist them with purchasing productive assets

6. **What is the difference between the SunTrust savings account and savings account from another financial institution?**
- We have a contract with all SunTrust banks which allows youth who have completed the enrollment process and are between the ages of 14-26 to open a special savings account, called an IDA, at any of their locations. Youth as young as age 14 can open this type of account as long as they have a government issued ID, know their social security number, have \$5, and have the award letter provided at the financial literacy training. The award letter is provided to the youth on the day that they complete the financial literacy training. Once youth open the savings account at SunTrust bank, a "no debit" hold will be placed on the account and youth can only make deposits into the account. Youth can open a savings account at any financial institution they desire. While all youth are provided an award letter at the training, these letters should only be presented when opening the IDA at SunTrust banks **only**. If youth decide to open an account at Chase bank, Bank of America, a local bank or credit union, they will simply open a regular savings account and they will be subject to the opening requirements of that financial institution. The "no debit" hold only apply to a savings account opened at SunTrust bank. If youth open a savings at any other financial institution, they can withdraw from it anytime they like.
7. **Can participants withdraw from their SunTrust Opportunity Passport™ anytime they get ready?**
- Participants cannot withdraw from the SunTrust Opportunity Passport™ once they have opened the account. This is a locked deposit only savings account. The purpose of the program is to encourage saving for matching purposes. Withdrawing money from the savings account defeats this purpose. If participants wish to withdraw money from their SunTrust account once it is open or they decide they no longer want to remain enrolled, they need to contact the Opportunity Passport™ coordinator and they will be assisted with the steps necessary to have their account unlocked. We will never touch the money a youth has saved, their money will always be theirs and we will grant them access to it upon request.
8. **If a youth does not open the locked IDA at SunTrust bank are they still eligible to enroll in the program?**
- Youth have the option to open a savings account at SunTrust or at any financial institution they desire. Either option is sufficient for program enrollment.
9. **Why do youth need a government issued ID to enroll into the program?**
- Youth must open a savings account to enroll in Opportunity Passport™. Banks will not open a savings account for youth without a government issued ID. We want to serve all eligible youth and we want to encourage all interested youth to enroll. However, the government issued ID is a bank requirement. Please check with your desired financial institution for specific opening requirements. If you are aware of a financial institution that does not require a government issued ID, please let the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator know.
10. **If youth already have a savings account and/or have already saved for their match can they enroll and what do they have to do?**
- Yes, youth can use their existing savings account as long as the account is in their name. The youth will need to attach proof of account ownership. This can be a savings account statement summary or a letter from the bank which lists the name on the account, the type of account, and the account number. They need to turn this in along with the enrollment application. To match, the youth will need to complete all of the enrollment steps and, once enrolled, they can complete the match form and turn in their documentation for processing.



**11. What is the minimum amount of money a youth need to have in their account to begin their first match?**

- There is no minimum amount specifically. The youth needs half of the total costs of the covered asset purchase to be eligible to match. For example if a youth would like to match to pay 6 months of car insurance which totaling \$1500, they need to have at least \$750 in their savings account.

**12. Is this a one-time match or can the participants match several times?**

- This is a multiple match opportunity up to \$3000. Participants can match several times towards various assets up to \$3000. For example, youth can match towards a vehicle purchase for \$1000, vehicle insurance for \$750, and rent for \$1250. Once youth have exhausted that \$3000 in full, they are no longer eligible to match.

**13. Can a youth match for multiple vehicles in this program?**

- Unfortunately, No. This program was designed to assist youth with getting on their feet upon starting out with their first car, apartment, investment etc. in the hopes that the young people would take advantage of this one time hand up and propel their way forward while building their path towards financial freedom.

**14. What if the program participant gets adopted or they opt out of care?**

- As long as the young person was in foster care for at least one day on or after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, they are eligible to match. Youth must also continue to save, maintain current contact information with the Opportunity Passport™ Coordinator, and continue to take the required surveys every April and October.

**15. How long does a program participant have to save my money?**

- Youth must match by their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. This means youth will have until your 26<sup>th</sup> birthday to save your money and complete the match process.

**16. Are DJJ youth eligible for this program?**

- DJJ youth are not eligible for this program if they have never been in foster care on or before their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**17. If youth move out of the state are they still eligible to match though the Georgia Opportunity Passport™ Program?**

- Unfortunately, if a youth permanently moves out of the state of Georgia, they are no longer eligible to match through the Georgia Opportunity Passport™ program. The good thing is that any money that the youth has saved will always be their funds. The youth can have access to those funds, if it is a locked SunTrust account, once the SunTrust funds release authorization form has been submitted and processed.
- However, if a youth is attending college out of state and have not permanently moved out of the state of Georgia, they can still match through Opportunity Passport™.



**Georgia Division of Family and Children Services  
Youth Rights Grievance Form**

Youth Name:

County:            Region:

Youth Email:

Youth Contact Number:

Youth Placement:

DFCS Case Manager:

STEP ONE Grievance

STEP TWO Grievance

What right do you feel has been violated? Please explain what happened.

What have you done to resolve this situation/concern prior to filing a STEP ONE of Youth Rights Grievance (INFORMALS)?

How would you like this situation/concern to be resolved?

Please provide contact information for any person who was involved including youth advocate.

Name

Phone Number

Relationship (to youth)

Date Submitted:



**Georgia Division of Family and Children Services  
Babysitting & Overnight Guidelines**

The "reasonable and prudent parent standard" (RPPS) applies to both babysitting and overnights for children and youth. The foster caregiver may approve babysitting and overnight stays without prior approval from the agency as long as it meets the guidelines below.

The RPPS standard characterized is by **careful and sensible** parental decisions that **maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child** while at the same time **encouraging the emotional and developmental** growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

**Babysitter Guidelines**

- Make a reasonable and prudent decision regarding the babysitter.

A babysitter:

- Must be at least 18 years old, reliable and competent to provide care needed.
- Prepared and able to meet the needs of children placed in their temporary care.
- Explained the DFCS discipline policy and provided with behavior management instructions.
- Provide information regarding care needs as well as emergency contact information.

**Note:** Babysitters are classified as either routine or occasional. Routine babysitters must be screened<sup>1</sup> and approved by the agency. **Routine care** means care provided more than once a week, usually at designated times. These individuals must be screened by DFCS case manager. **Occasional care** means care provided once a week or less with no more than three occurrences. Upon completion of the third occurrence, the occasional provider is considered "routine" and is subject to the same screening requirements. Contact the agency to ensure that screenings are conducted before an occasional caregiver becomes routine.

**Overnight/Sleepovers Guidelines**

- Make a reasonable and prudent decision regarding the overnight/sleep over request.
- May not exceed two nights without permission of the agency.
- Caregiver must be able to meet the needs of children placed in their temporary care.
- Explained the DFCS discipline policy and provided with behavior management instructions.
- Out of state travel regardless of length must be pre-approved by DFCS and the court.
- Provide information regarding care needs as well as emergency contact information.

<sup>1</sup> -Screenings must include DFCS CPS records, Sexual Offender's Registry, Board of Pardons and Parole and Department of Corrections.

## Caregiver Guideline for Reasonable and Prudent Parenting (RPPS)

*The RPPS standard is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.*

Activity Category	GREEN-RPPS APPLIES—Caregiver may make a reasonable and prudent parenting decision without consulting in advance with the agency.	RED—RPPS DOES NOT APPLY. Caregiver must contact the agency for approval / consultation.
Family Recreation	Movies, Community Events, Hiking, Camping, Swimming	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Social/Extracurricular	Camps, field trips, school related activities, church activities, youth organizations, sports, social activities with peers.	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Overnights	Ok for up to two nights	Any overnight event that will exceed to two nights.
Leaving Youth Unsupervised	<p>May approve youth age 14 years and older to be unsupervised for reasonable amounts of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria to consider include the following:</li> <li>• Length of time the youth has been in the placement setting;</li> <li>• Youth's judgment and level of maturity or development;</li> <li>• Youth's demonstration of dependability, responsibility, and trustworthiness;</li> <li>• Youth's history of emotional/psychological stability;</li> <li>• Youth's history of running away and other status offenses;</li> </ul>	Youth under age 14 years of age may not be left unsupervised.