



## Tips on Starting a Negotiation



According to ACS policy, it is your foster parent or group home staff's responsibility to prepare you for independent living, which includes learning to make good financial decisions for your child. That could mean:

- Creating a budget together
- Shopping together
- Agreeing on an allowance meant just for you to purchase certain items for your child, like clothes or diapers
- Agreeing on how much money your foster parent will use for housing, food and other necessities for your child.

The tricky part is that there are no laws or policies detailing HOW your foster parent or group home staff should prepare you for independent living. There is no set amount of money they must give you, and no particular areas where you automatically get to decide how the money is spent. This might be confusing and frustrating for you, your foster parent, and your caseworker.

If you aren't being included in any decisions about money, you can talk to your foster parent or group home staff, your caseworker, your lawyer or a member of ACS's Teen Specialist Unit about your wish to learn how to budget for your child. That can be the beginning of a negotiation.

### Starting a Negotiation

Like in all families, money can be a source of conflict, so you'll want to do your best to make any negotiations around money as diplomatic as possible. Getting the outcome you want often depends on being thoughtful and polite, as well as determined, rather than upset or angry.

Negotiating well means knowing what's most important to you and how much effort you're willing to put in to make sure your right to be involved in financial decision-making is protected.

You can ask yourself:

- What do I want most?
- What am I willing to compromise on?
- What do I want to learn about money management?



Negotiating well also means caring about what's most important to your foster parent or group home staff. If you don't know, you can start by asking them. You might say, "I'd like to learn more about budgeting for my child. Can you tell me about how you make budgeting decisions?" Often, the more information you have, the easier it is to negotiate.

Before you start a negotiation, it can also be helpful to try to put yourself in your foster parent or staff member's shoes. You can ask yourself questions like:

- Since my child is now also living in this home, should some of the money from my child's stipend be spent for rent and utilities?
- Might my foster parent or staff buy food or diapers in bulk, making it more economical than if I bought those items myself?
- How can I show that I am able to handle money for my child responsibly?
- What should I ask for now, and what should I ask for later, once I've shown that I can make responsible financial decisions?

## Additional Tips on Starting a Negotiation

### Getting Support

If you know what's most important to you and to your foster parent or staff, you're more likely to come up with solutions that everyone will agree to.

Because it is unclear according to law or policy exactly what your money-related rights are in this situation, you might also want to speak to your caseworker, your lawyer, or a member of ACS's Teen Specialist Unit first. They may be able to help clarify what to ask for. You might even ask your caseworker to sit down with you and your foster parent or group home staff to try to work out an agreement together. You can also go back to any of these people if you need more support.

It's important to remember that you can't demand that your foster parent give you a certain amount of money or purchase certain items, and no one else can force them to. But you DO have a right to be involved in financial decision-making for your child. You can keep returning to the question: "How can I be involved in deciding how the money for my child is spent, so that I know how to pay for my child's needs when I am independent?"

To talk to a member of ACS's Teen Specialist Unit call 212-676-6001.

