



## Going Places: SPARC’s Driver’s License Campaign

### THE CASE FOR A CAMPAIGN

Learning to drive in the teen years is a rite of passage to young adulthood for millions of youth. It brings new levels of independence and opportunities, enabling young people to take themselves to schools, work, and activities. However, teens in foster care often face significant barriers to obtaining a driver’s license, such as difficulty securing the typical parental or guardian permission needed to enroll in driver’s education or secure an insurance policy, as well as an inability to pay for the various fees associated with becoming a driver. Without a driver’s license, young people in foster care often miss out on age-appropriate adolescent experiences and opportunities that contribute to success in adulthood.

In recent years, policy makers have taken an active interest in removing barriers that keep young people in foster care from having normal growing up experiences. In particular, in 2014, the Congress enacted the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183). This federal law addresses some of the well-documented barriers to “normalcy” that youth in foster care face and recognizes important insights from neuroscience and the child development field, which is that the absence of age-appropriate developmental experiences can contribute to the lack of preparedness for adulthood that too many young people in foster care currently struggle with.

The law directs state public child welfare agencies to train foster parents (and other caregivers) on the new “Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard” which aims to strengthen the ability of foster parents to make more decisions regarding the daily activities of children in their care with respect to their social, extracurricular, and cultural activities (i.e. sports, field trips and overnight activities). In implementing the Act, some states have provided further specificity about foster parents’ decision-making authority to include authority for issues related to youth obtaining a learner’s permit, learning to drive, and obtaining a license consistent with state law. The Strengthening Families Act requires that states provide youth as they age out of care a copy of their **driver’s license** (or state identification card), among other important personal documentation.

Recognizing the high level of importance that a driver’s license can have in the life of an adolescent or young adult in foster care, SPARC and its state partners have launched a targeted policy campaign to encourage policymakers to take action to remove barriers and promote better access to driver’s education and driver’s licenses for young people in foster care. By doing so, they can make a measurable difference in the lives of countless young people who want to have the same opportunities as their peers to work, attend school and participate in community activities.





## GOING PLACES CAMPAIGN

The Going Places Campaign identifies several key issues that can be addressed through the policymaking process to help improve the ability of young people in foster care to obtain their driver's licenses. This includes policies associated with:

- Enrolling in driver's education courses:
  - Examples:
    - Eliminate costs for foster youth to attend driver's education courses
- Obtaining a driver's/learner's permit
  - Examples:
    - Establish training for foster parents on teaching youth to drive
    - Eliminate or reduce DMV and other fees related to obtaining permit
- Obtaining a driver's licenses
  - Examples:
    - Give foster parents or caseworkers the authority to sign for the license application and provide liability protections
- Securing car/automobile insurance
  - Examples:
    - Work with insurance companies to establish lower rates for foster youth,
    - Invalidate provisions requiring insurance in order to have a license (even if the youth does not have a car),
    - Allow youth to contract for their own insurance
    - Remove DMV fees; create a driver's license fund for foster youth.

The Going Places Campaign draws on examples of promising state approaches in removing such barriers, and provides profiles of policy approaches taken in states that have demonstrated specific leadership on this issue, including Florida, Arizona and Nebraska. For example, Florida recently passed legislation that created a 3-year pilot program for youth in foster care to obtain driver's licenses in a meaningful way. The program is called Keys to Independence and allows reimbursements for youth ages 15-21 for their learner's and driver's license fees, testing fees, traffic and substance abuse course, driver's education course, and insurance costs. More information about Keys to Independence is available [here](#).

SPARC makes a variety of tools and information available to its partners who are interested in the campaign. For more information, contact Rricha Mathur at [r-richam@firstfocus.org](mailto:r-richam@firstfocus.org).

