

# Greater equity for young adults in foster care

## Why it matters

Young adults in foster care should have **the same rights** as other young adults.



## Background

In Oregon, young adults ages 18 to 21 **must remain wards of the court to receive services** in foster care. These services can include independent living subsidies and the opportunity to participate in Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP), which helps youth and young adults transition successfully out of the state's or Tribal custody and become self-sufficient adults.

## Risk

But remaining a ward of the court also means that a young adult has **limited rights compared to young adults in the general population**. For example, wards of the court cannot sign for their own driver's licenses, get married or join the armed forces without state authorization or travel out of state without permission. This impedes their freedom and power of self-direction, which are critical for their future success as adults.

## Solution

Although there are instances when remaining a ward of the court is necessary to ensure a young adult's safety, most do not require legal custody to be safe. For many young adults in foster care, it makes sense to receive benefits by remaining in care through a **voluntary placement agreement**. The federal government recognizes such agreements, and many states utilize them.

Senate Bill 202 would amend ORS 418.312 to allow young adults to remain in foster care up to age 21 through voluntary placement agreements. Currently in Oregon, the law prevents voluntary placement agreements from extending beyond age 18. By extending to age 21, we can help ensure that young adults in foster care can continue to participate in programs and access important services while still ensuring their appropriate rights as adults.

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