



# The Opportunity Passport™

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is a national foundation whose mission is to help youth in foster care make successful transitions to adulthood. We bring together the people and resources needed for youth to make the connections they need to education, employment, health care, housing, and supportive personal and community relationships.

The Opportunity Passport™ is the centerpiece of the Initiative's work. Designed to organize resources and create opportunities for young people leaving foster care, the Opportunity Passport™ is a promising new tool with three related components:

- A personal debit account to be used to pay for short-term expenses;
- A matched savings account, also known as an Individual Development Account (IDA), to be used for specific assets, such as education expenses and housing down payments/deposits.
- Door openers, a host of opportunities to be developed on a local basis. Examples include pre-approval for registration for community college courses or expedited access to job-training or adult education courses.

The Opportunity Passport™ helps participants learn financial management; obtain experience with the banking system; save money for education, housing, health care, and other specified expenses; and gain streamlined access to educational, training, and vocational opportunities.

**How Does the Opportunity Passport™ Work?** The Opportunity Passport™ is available to youth ages 14 through 23 who were in foster care after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Participants are recruited by Community Partnership Boards and Youth Leadership Boards supported by the Initiative. Participants must complete financial literacy training prior to enrollment.

**Where is the Opportunity Passport™ Available?** The Initiative is piloting the Opportunity Passport™ in these sites: *Atlanta, Georgia; Denver, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; Detroit and 10 Michigan counties; Hartford/Bridgeport, Connecticut; Maine; Nashville, Tennessee; Providence, Rhode Island; San Diego, California; and Tampa, Florida (a Co-Investment Site with the Eckerd Family Foundation).*

**How Can You Support the Opportunity Passport™?** With community foundations and local United Ways as potential partners, communities, employers, and public agencies can support the Opportunity Passport™.

- Local funders can match IDA funds so participants acquire assets more rapidly.
- Small businesses and large corporations can provide internships, mentoring programs, and jobs to Opportunity Passport™ participants.
- Community and faith-based organizations can offer Door Openers to assist with education, mentor relationships, and youth leadership opportunities.
- State and county child welfare officials can use Foster Care Independence Act – or “Chafee” – dollars for matching funds or the creation of new Door Openers.

**Policymakers Can Also Support the Opportunity Passport™ by:**

- Working with community partners to make sure that state laws and regulations are supportive of the Opportunity Passport™;
- Providing tax credits -- not just deductions -- to employers making contributions to IDA programs;
- Identifying new and existing state resources that can be used to sustain the Opportunity Passport™ over the long-term; and
- Engaging with local community leaders to initiate or expand the Opportunity Passport™ .