



CREDIT REPORTING GUIDE for _____

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Introduction

Building, maintaining, and monitoring credit is a critical life skill to acquire for all youth transitioning into adulthood. On October 1, 2011, the Federal Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act required that each youth in foster care are protected against identity theft and receive assistance with any inaccuracies on their credit reports.

This new mandate requires that each adolescent in foster care ages 16 -21 will receive:

1. A copy of their credit report from each of the 3 consumer credit report agencies (CRAs) annually until discharged from foster care;
2. Assistance with interpreting their credit report; and
3. Assistance with resolving any inaccurate information and/or fraud.

Note: No minor (adolescent age 16 and 17) should have anything listed on their credit report because they do not have the legal capacity to sign a contract or apply for credit on their own. Therefore if a report does exist for a minor, it may be due to error, fraud or identity theft.

A credit report is a record of a person's credit activities. A credit report includes your name, social security number and information on where you live, how you pay your bills, and whether you have been sued or arrested, or have filed for bankruptcy. It lists any credit card accounts or loans you have, the balances, and how regularly payments are made.

Each person is entitled under law to receive one free credit report every 12 months from each of the nationwide CRA's. This can be done through www.annualcreditreport.com. The 3 CRA's are:

- Equifax
- Trans Union
- Experian

Adults over 18 years of age may obtain credit reports through www.annualcreditreport.com. Note that this is the **only website authorized to satisfy requests for annual credit reports free of charge**. Other websites that claim to offer "free credit reports", "free credit scores", or "free credit monitoring" are not part of the legally mandated free annual credit report program and should not be used.

Minors, age 16 and 17, cannot request their credit report on their own or through the annualcreditreport website.

This instructional guide contains information on how to request credit reports from the three credit reporting agencies. Each CRA has separate requirements. In addition, there are specific instructions included regarding credit reporting for minors (adolescents age 16 & 17) and credit reporting for young adults (18-21).

At this time, Equifax has not developed a system for providing credit reports to minors (adolescents age 16 and 17). Equifax anticipates that they will develop a system in the near future. An addendum to this instructional guide will be provided at that time.

Also attached in the instructional guide is a tool on "Safeguarding Your Child's Future" (See Attachment D in instructional guide). This tool provides you with ideas of preventing child identity theft.

CP&P policy for credit reports can found at II D 1009, Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out of Home Placement.

If you have any questions please contact Shannon Lain in the Office of Adolescent Services, Shannon.Lain@dcf.state.nj.us or 609-888-7100.

CREDIT REPORT INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINORS (Adolescents age 16 & 17)

CP&P Worker Responsibilities for Credit Reporting for Minors

Minors in an out of home placement who are age 16 and 17 cannot request their own credit reports.

The CP&P worker is responsible for:

1. Requesting the minor adolescent's credit report(s) annually from the 3 credit-reporting agencies (CRAs);
2. If a credit report exists, helping the adolescent to interpret the report;
3. Assisting the adolescent in disputing and resolving any inaccuracies and/or fraud (See Attachment A). Note that no minor should have anything listed on their credit report (help is available to staff from the DCF Office of Legal Affairs); and
4. Document efforts in a contact note.

CP&P **must** have a court order in the case file indicating legal custody of the minor adolescent at the time of request.

Note: Do not save the adolescent's credit report onto any DCF computer or electronic device.

Requesting Reports from the CRAs

1. Trans Union- Go to www.transunion.com/childidentitytheft. Click on the, "Child Identity Theft Inquiry Form" and enter all requested information. The credit report will be sent to the CP&P worker. Upon receiving the report, follow steps 2-3 in above "CP&P Worker Responsibilities" section of these instructions.

2. Experian- Compose a letter requesting a credit report using CP&P state letterhead that includes the following information:

- Adolescent's Name
- Adolescent's full address
- Provide all addresses the adolescent resided at within the past two years
- Adolescent's Social Security Number
- Adolescent's Date of Birth
- Copy of Court Order-which indicates the state has custody of adolescent (black out all sensitive information, i.e., reason adolescent is in care. Consult the Adolescent Specialist for assistance in determining the information to redact.)
- Copy of CP&P worker's official state-issued picture identification card
- Instructions regarding where the completed report is to be sent (CP&P worker name and Local Office Address)

Mail this credit report request to:

Experian National Consumer Assistance Center
PO Box 9701
Allen, Texas 75013

Experian will send the report in a white plain envelope with no indication that it is from that agency. The response will be "No Record" or "Record will be enclosed". Upon receiving the report, follow steps 2-3 in above "CP&P Worker Responsibilities" section.

3. Equifax- N/A. Equifax has not created a process to complete credit reports for minors at this time. (This guide, and CP&P policy, will be updated once a process is developed.)

CREDIT REPORT INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADOLESCENTS 18-21

CP&P Worker Responsibilities for Credit Reporting for Adults

Adolescents and young adults ages 18-21 in an out-of-home placement can request their own credit reports. The CP&P worker can provide assistance, but should not request a credit report for an 18 to 21 year old.

The CP&P worker is responsible for:

1. Assisting the adolescent/young adult to request their credit report(s) annually from all three credit-reporting agencies (CRAs);
2. Assisting the adolescent/young adult to interpret the report (See Attachment B);
3. Assisting the adolescent/young adult in disputing and resolving any inaccuracies and/or fraud (See Attachment A);
4. Complete Credit Reports Outcome Form with adolescent/young adult (See Attachment C). Provide one copy to the adolescent/young adult and retain one printed copy for the case record;
5. Ensure the adolescent/young adult keeps copies of their credit reports. Retain copies of the credit reports for the case record; and
6. Document efforts in a contact note.

Note: Do not save the adolescent's credit report onto any DCF computer or electronic device.

Requesting Reports from the CRAs

1. Go to the website www.annualcreditreport.com
2. Click on the state of New Jersey
3. Follow instructions on website and fill in identifying information.
4. On the next screen, select reports for all CRAs and select "next".
5. After the credit report is displayed, follow the instructions to email, print, and/or save the credit report.
6. After you receive the report from the first CRA, go back to www.annualcreditreport.com and select next to retrieve the credit report for the second CRA.
7. Repeat instructions 5 and 6 to retrieve credit reports from the second and third CRAs.
8. Refer to Attachment A to dispute and resolve any inaccuracies.
9. Complete Credit Reports Outcome Form.

How to Clear a Youth in Foster Care's Credit Report

How do I clear a foster child's credit report?

If you discover that a foster child is a victim of identity theft, take the following steps on the youth's behalf to prevent further harm. Each CRA has varying processes to handle requests for minors when they have been a victim of identity theft but below is a general outline of what to do. Keep a written record with the details of your efforts and copies of all correspondence in the case record and provide detail in the "credit reporting" section of the online case record.

1. Identifying and correcting inaccuracies/discrepancies

Credit reports may contain erroneous information. Even seemingly harmless mistakes, such as misspelled names or incorrect addresses, may be detrimental to a person's credit rating, and could be indicative of identity theft or other serious problems. All incorrect information should be reported to the credit bureau and the DCF Office of Legal Affairs, if there is any suspicion of fraudulent activity, such as identity theft. See CP&P policy II D 1009, Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out-of-Home Placement.

2. Contact the credit reporting companies

Contact the three nationwide credit reporting companies. Explain that the child is a minor and cannot legally enter into any type of contract. To prove that the child is a minor, send the credit reporting companies a copy of the child's birth certificate or other documentation of age, such as a court order, and a letter asking them to remove all accounts, application inquiries, and collection notices from the credit report associated with the child's name or personal information. Documentation may also be needed to verify that the youth is in foster care and the agency is authorized to act of the youth's behalf. OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION. FOSTER PARENT ID LETTER?

3. Place an initial fraud alert

If a credit report was created for the child as a result of identity theft, consider placing an initial fraud alert on the report. An initial fraud alert requires potential creditors to verify a person's identity before extending credit. When a creditor knows that a minor child is involved, it will not ordinarily extend credit.

To place an initial fraud alert, contact any one of the three credit reporting companies. The company that you call must contact the other two. All three will place the initial fraud alert on the report they have for the child. After you place the initial fraud alert, the credit reporting company will explain your rights (in acting on behalf of the child), including your right to get a free credit report from each credit reporting company.

4. Consider a credit freeze

If there is a credit report for the child, you can also consider placing a credit freeze. If you place a credit freeze (also known as a security freeze), potential creditors cannot get the child's credit report, which makes it less likely an identity thief can open new accounts. You must contact each of the three credit reporting companies directly to place a freeze. The credit reporting companies may ask for proof of the child's Social Security number, proof that you are legally able to represent/are the child's legal representative, and a copy of the child's birth certificate. Putting a freeze on a minor's credit report can be a useful deterrent to additional fraud.

Attachment A (continued)

You must lift the freeze from the credit report before the minor child applies for student or auto loans, an apartment, or job. Once the child turns age 18, he/she can ask to lift the freeze him or herself.

Although businesses do not ordinarily extend credit to a minor, you also should consider placing an extended fraud alert – which lasts for seven years – on the credit report. When a business sees an alert on a credit report, it must verify the borrower’s identity before issuing credit. Identity theft victims – including children and youth in foster care – can have an extended alert placed on their credit reports if they can provide an Identity Theft Report to the credit reporting company.

What It Is	What It Does	How to Get It	What it Costs	How Long It Lasts
Initial fraud alert	Requires creditors to verify an identity before granting credit and makes it harder for a thief to open fraudulent new accounts.	Contact one credit reporting company. It will share your request with the other two companies.	Free	90 days
Extended fraud alert	Requires creditors to verify an identity before granting credit and makes it harder for a thief to open fraudulent new accounts.	Contact one credit reporting company. It will share your request with the other two companies.	Free	7 years
Credit freeze	Stops creditors from getting your credit report unless you lift the freeze.	Contact each credit reporting company.	Depends on state law	Depends on state law

Interpreting a Credit Report

Each Credit Reporting Agencies report gives the name, date of birth and social security number (or the last four digits of the social security number) for the consumer. This information should be checked carefully to verify that it matches the information in DCF records, social security card and the birth certificate.

When a credit report is received it is important to record and keep the confirmation/report number from the CRA. **The confirmation/report number is needed if there are any inaccuracies or fraud in order to file a report.**

Credit reports for 16 and 17 year old adolescents, should not have any accounts listed or funds owed on accounts. If there are accounts or funds owed on the minor adolescents credit report a fraud report should be filed, follow policy at II D 1009, Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out-of-Home Placement.

Credit reports for an adolescent age 18 to 21 may have accounts listed or funds owed. When the adolescent's credit report shows accounts with funds owed, past due or in collections, review these accounts and amounts with the adolescent to verify that there are no discrepancies and that there is no fraud,. See policy at II D 1009, Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out-of-Home Placement.

Experian

Experian has a sample credit report that explains each section of the credit report which can be found at:

<http://www.experian.com/assets/credit-education/brochures/sample-credit-report.pdf>

TransUnion

TransUnion credit reports have the following 7 topic areas:

- Personal information: name, date since the person has been on their files, social security number, date of birth and telephone number, employment data reported.
- Account Information: explains how they list the payment history that is reported to TransUnion.
- Satisfactory Accounts: Lists accounts that have no adverse information. This section will identify the agency, and a portion of the account number, balance, date updated, high balance, credit limit, last payment, pay status, account type, responsibility, terms, and date opened. Additionally there is a record of late payments and the payment history.
- Regular Inquiries: The names and addresses of companies that have received the credit report within the last two years. This section gives the date the report was requested and what the inquiry type is.

Attachment B (continued)

- Account Review Inquiries: Provides the names and addresses of companies and the date that have obtained information from the credit report for the purpose of an account review or other business.
- Credit Report Messages: Messages from the credit reporting agency, TransUnion.
- Consumer Rights: Explains the rights of a consumer under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Equifax

The Equifax credit report is divided into nine areas and allows the user to click on the blue words to get an explanation of the word or topic. There is an explanation after each topic area which gives tips to increase credit and/or what the section is reporting. If you click on the words in blue in the first section it will take you to that section of the report. The topic areas are as follows:

- Credit summary: Lists the account types that a person may have, mortgage, installment, revolving, and other, as well as the age of the account, the newest and oldest accounts of the consumer. This includes the names of companies that have inquired about the consumers credit history, if there is any negative information regarding the consumer's credit. Potentially negative information gives an overview of late payments, accounts that are in collection status and public records.
- Account information: Is detailed information about each open and closed account that the consumer has. After the name, address, and telephone number of the company is the account number, the type of account, the credit limit, term duration of the loan or account, when the payments are due, and the status.
- After each account is an 81 month payment history. There is a payment history key after all of the accounts are listed that explains what the symbol, numbers or letters mean in the 81 month payment history.
 - For a 16 and 17 year old, this section should not have any content.
 - For an 18 to 21 year old, it is important to review the section, which states if the account is paid as agreed or is delinquent, with the adolescent to ensure that the status of the account is accurate.. The other areas to review are the name of the company, credit amount, date opened/closed, balance, and date of first delinquency. If the account is paid off and closed it will be noted next to "Activity Designator".
- Inquiries: Identifies the name, address and telephone number or the company(s) that have requested your credit report as well as the date of the inquiry. These inquiries are made by companies that the consumer has applied for a loan or credit.
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Attachment B (continued)

- Negative information: Is identified as “negative accounts”, which are accounts that are not paid as agreed in the credit agreement or loan. This area also lists any accounts that are in collections, and public records.
- Personal information: name, social security number, age or date of birth and names formerly known as. The current and previous addresses of the consumer and the date reported to the CRA are listed. Other identification, employment history, alerts and consumer statement are a part of this section as well.
- Dispute file information: explains that there are three ways to file a dispute, how to initiate a dispute and how to check the status of a dispute.
- Summary of your rights under the FCRA: Explains the rights of the consumer under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).
- Remediating the effects of identity theft: provides an example identity theft. This section gives information on what to do if the consumer’s identity is stolen and what the consumer has the right to, such as free copies of the information in their file.
- Your rights under state law: Explains what the consumer’s rights are in the state that they reside regarding identity theft.

SAFEGUARDING YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

Child Identity Theft

Child identity theft happens when someone uses a minor's personal information to commit fraud. A thief may steal and use a child's information to get a job, government benefits, medical care, utilities, car loans, or a mortgage. Avoiding, discovering, and undoing the damage resulting from the theft of a child's identity can be a challenge.

Adults can monitor their own credit reports every few months to see if someone has misused their information, and order a fraud alert or freeze on their credit files to stymie further misuse. But most parents and guardians don't expect their youngster to have a credit file, and as a result, rarely request a child's credit report, let alone review it for accuracy. A thief who steals a child's information may use it for many years before the crime is discovered. The victim may learn about the theft years later, when applying for a loan, apartment, or job.

Protecting Your Child's Identity

Keep Your Child's Personal Information Safe

Parents do a lot to protect their children from physical harm, from teaching them to look both ways before crossing the street to making sure they're dressed warmly for a snowy day. Protecting their personal information is important, too. Here's how:

- Keep all documents that show a child's personal information safely locked up. What is personal information? At a minimum, it includes a child's date of birth, Social Security number, and birth certificate. Don't carry your child's Social Security card with you.
- Share your child's Social Security number only when you know and trust the other party. If someone asks for your child's Social Security number, ask why they want it, how they'll safeguard it, how long they'll keep it, and how they'll dispose of it. If you're not satisfied with the answers, don't share the number. Ask to use another identifier.
- Before you share personal information on the internet, make sure you have a secure connection. A secure website has a lock icon in the address bar and a URL that begins with "https."
- Use a computer with updated antivirus and firewall protection. Don't send personal or financial information – your child's or your own, for that matter – through an unsecured wireless connection in a public place.
- If you use a password to sign into a website, log out of the site when you're done on that site.
- Limit the chances that your child's information will be stolen or misused at school. Find out who has access to your child's personal information, and read the notices that schools are required to send explaining your rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). That law protects the privacy of student education records, and gives you the right to opt out of the release of directory information to third parties, including other families.

Attachment D (continued)**Safely Dispose of Personal Information**

Your trash could be a treasure trove of information for an identity thief. Before you get rid of information on paper or online, make sure no one else can use it.

Shred letters, forms, and other papers that include your child's personal information before you throw them out. Delete electronic computer files that you no longer need, and empty your online trash or recycle bin.

Learn how to remove your personal or financial information that might be stored on your computer, cell phone, or other device before you dispose of it.

Share Safety Tips With Your Child

Your computer can hold enormous amounts of information, and it's crucial that it stays secure. Talk to your child about best practices for computer security, including:

- using “strong” passwords – those with at least eight characters, as well as numbers and symbols
- keeping passwords private
- knowing the risks of sharing files through peer to peer software, which may include giving someone access to more information on your computer than you want to share
- using anti-virus software that updates automatically
- being alert to phishing scams, where criminals send an email, text, or pop-up message that looks like it's from a legitimate organization. A phishing message asks the recipient to click on a link or call a phone number, and to share personal information for a prize or some other benefit. The message to kids: delete these messages without opening or responding.

Talk with your child regularly about the privacy settings on social media sites and what information and photos to share on them. For example, it's not a great idea to show photos with school or team uniforms, list birth dates or specific locations, or show background settings that are easy to identify. One reason? Someone can use the information posted on a social media profile to guess account passwords. FTC.GOV/IDTHEFT

Warning Signs of Child Identity Theft

Personal circumstances may increase the risk of child identity theft – an adult in financial hot water, for example, may think “adopting” a child's identity is a way to start over. But using someone else's identity, regardless of the reason, is a crime. Identity theft can be committed by a family member, a neighbor, or by someone you never met who gets access to your child's information. Several signs can tip you off to a problem:

- You get calls from collection agencies, bills from credit card companies or medical providers, or offers for credit cards or bank account checks in your child's name, even if your child has never applied for or used these services.
- Your child, or your family, is denied government benefits because benefits are being paid to another account that is using your child's Social Security number.

Attachment D (continued)

- The Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), or some other government agency asks you to confirm that your child is employed, even though your child has never had a job.
- After you file a tax return listing your dependent child's name and Social Security number, you get notice from the IRS that the same information is listed on another tax return.
- Your child gets a notice from the IRS saying he or she failed to pay taxes on income, even though your child has no income.

Does Your Child Have a Credit Report?

You may want to check whether your child has a credit report. Decide how often to check based on whether you think information is at risk. For example, if you see warning signs, lost your child's Social Security card, had a break-in, or your child's information was compromised in a data breach, you may want to check whether there is a report using your child's name or information. Check at least as often as the law entitles you to do it for free.

It's a good idea to check whether your child has a credit report close to the child's 16th birthday, which is probably before the child applies for a tuition or car loan, apartment, or job. If you find a report with errors, you can work on correcting the errors before the child needs credit.

There are three nationwide credit reporting companies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Contact each credit reporting company and ask it to search to see if your child has a credit report. Each company will check for files related to your child's name and Social Security number, and also for files related only to the Social Security number. You must provide the credit reporting companies with proof that you are the child's parent or legal guardian.

FTC.GOV/IDTHEFT

II D 1009 Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out-of-Home Placement
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1009.1 Purpose **8-13-2012**

This section establishes policies and procedures for the provision of credit reports to youth aged 16-21 in out of home placement, as required by the Federal Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Public Law (Pub. L.) 112-34), which became effective on October 1, 2011.

1009.2 Authority **8-13-2012**

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act (Public Law 112-34).

1009.3 Definition of Terms **8-13-2012**

For the purpose of this policy section, the following definitions apply:

“Adolescent” means a person who is 16 or 17 years old for whom CP&P has legal custody OR a person who is 18-20 years old (up to the person’s 21st birthday) who has agreed to accept services and has an open CP&P case.

“Credit Reporting Agency (CRA)” means one of the three major credit reporting agencies required by law to provide a free annual credit report: Experian, Equifax, or TransUnion.

“Credit Report” means information compiled by a consumer reporting agency bearing on a consumer’s credit worthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living which is used or expected to be used as a factor in establishing that consumer’s eligibility for credit.

“Out-of-Home Placement” means all out-of-home placement settings for adolescents, including, but not limited to, resource family homes, group homes, independent living, and other adolescent housing programs.

1009.4 Policy **8-13-2012**

In accordance with the Act, it is DCF policy to:

1. Provide credit reports to adolescents aged 16-21 in out-of-home placement, and assist youth aged 18-21 in out-of-home placement to obtain their own credit reports.
2. Assist adolescents in out-of-home placement age 16 to 21 with interpreting the

credit report and resolving any inaccuracies.

1009.5 Overview

8-13-2012

A credit report is a record of a person's credit activities and includes personal information such as name, address, Social Security number, in addition to credit history, how regularly payments are made, and balances that are due. Consumers are entitled by Federal law to receive one free credit report every 12 months from each of the Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs).

Adults over 18 years of age may obtain credit reports through www.annualcreditreport.com. Note that this is the **only website authorized to satisfy requests for annual credit reports free of charge**. Other websites that claim to offer "free credit reports," "free credit scores" or "free credit monitoring" are not part of the legally mandated free annual credit report program and should not be used.

Minors, age 16 and 17, cannot request their credit report on their own or through the annualcreditreport website.

1009.6 Procedures for Requesting Credit Reports for Adolescents Age 16 and 17

8-13-2012

A) CP&P Worker Responsibilities for Credit Reporting for Minors:

B)

Minors, age 16 and 17, cannot request their own credit reports. The CP&P Worker is responsible for taking the following actions on behalf of these adolescents in out-of-home placement:

1. Requesting the adolescent's credit reports from the three credit reporting agencies (CRAs) at least annually;
2. If a credit report exists, helping the adolescent to interpret the report;
3. Assisting the adolescent in disputing and resolving any inaccuracies or fraud. Note that no minor should have anything listed on their credit report; and
4. Documenting efforts in a contact note.

CP&P **must** have a court order or other documentation of legal custody to make the request.

B) Requesting Reports from the CRA's for Minor Age 16 and 17:

1. Trans Union - Go to www.transunion.comchildidentitytheft. Click on the, "Child Identity Theft Inquiry Form" and enter all requested information. The credit report will be sent to the CP&P Worker on behalf of the adolescent. Upon receiving the report, follow steps 2 and 3 in the above, "CP&P Worker Responsibilities" section of these instructions.

2. Experian - Compose a letter requesting a credit report using CP&P Local Office State letterhead. Include the following information:

- Adolescent's name;
- Adolescent's current address;
- Prior addresses within the past two years;
- Adolescent's Social Security number;
- Adolescent's date of birth;
- Instructions regarding where the report should be sent; enter the CP&P Worker's name and the Local Office Address.

Attach the following to the letter:

- Copy of the Court Order-which indicates the State of New Jersey has custody of the adolescent (redact/black out all sensitive information, e.g., the reason adolescent is in care, the adolescent's case goal);
- Copy of the CP&P Worker's official State picture identification card.

Mail this credit report request to:

Experian National Consumer Assistance Center
PO Box 9701
Allen, Texas 75013

Experian will send the report in a white plain envelope with no indication that it is from that agency. The response will be "No Record" or "Record will be enclosed". Upon receiving the report, follow steps 2 and 3 in above, "CP&P Worker Responsibilities" section.

3. Equifax - Equifax has not created a process to request credit reports for minors. When Equifax establishes such a process, this policy will be updated.

Note: Do not save the adolescent's credit report onto any DCF computer or electronic device.

1009.7 Procedures for Requesting Credit Reports for Adolescents Age 18 to 21

8-13-2012

A) CP&P Worker Responsibilities for Credit Reporting for Young Adults:

Adolescents age 18 and older can request their own credit reports. The CP&P Worker should not request a credit report for an 18 to 21 year old. The Worker provides assistance, as needed.

The CP&P Worker is responsible for assisting the older adolescent in out-of-home placement as follows:

1. Guiding the adolescent's efforts to obtain credit reports from the three credit reporting agencies (CRA's) within the first 60 days of entering placement, and annually thereafter;
2. Helping the adolescent to interpret the report;
3. Assisting the adolescent in disputing and resolving any inaccuracies and/or indications

of fraud;

4. Completing CP&P Form 16-110, Credit Reports Form for Adolescents Age 18 to 21 with the adolescent. Provide one copy to the adolescent and retain one printed copy for the case record;
5. Ensuring the adolescent keeps copies of each credit report. Retain copies of the credit reports for the case record; and
6. Documenting all efforts to comply with this policy in a contact note.

Note: Do not save the adolescent's credit report onto any DCF computer or electronic device.

B) Requesting Reports from the CRAs:

1. Go to the website www.annualcreditreport.com.
2. Click on the State of New Jersey.
3. Follow instructions on the website. Fill in all identifying information requested.
4. On the next screen, select "reports for all CRAs," then select "next."
5. After the credit report is displayed, follow the instructions to e-mail, print, or save the credit report.
6. After you receive the report from the first CRA, go back to www.annualcreditreport.com and select "next" to retrieve the credit report for the second CRA.
7. Repeat step 6 to retrieve credit report from the final CRA.
8. If problems are found, see 1009.8, Procedures for Correcting or Disputing Information in a Credit Report, which details how to dispute and resolve any inaccuracies in a credit report.
9. Complete CP&P Form 16-110, Credit Reports Form for Adolescents Age 18 to 21 with the adolescent. Provide one copy to the adolescent and retain one printed copy for the case record.

1009.8 Procedures for Interpreting a Credit Report

8-13-2012

A) In General:

Each Credit Reporting Agencies report gives the name, date of birth and social security number (or the last four digits of the social security number) for the consumer. This information should be checked carefully to verify that it matches the information in DCF records, social security card and the birth certificate.

When a credit report is received it is important to record and keep the confirmation/report number from the CRA. The confirmation/report number is needed if there are any inaccuracies or fraud in order to file a report.

Credit reports for 16 and 17 year old adolescents, should not have any accounts listed or funds owed on accounts. If there are accounts or funds owed on the minor adolescents credit report a fraud report should be filed, follow policy at II D 1009, Annual Credit Report for Adolescents Age 16 or Older in Out-of-Home Placement.

Credit reports for an adolescent age 18 to 21 may have accounts listed or funds owed. When the adolescent's credit report shows accounts with funds owed, past due or in collections, review these accounts and amounts with the adolescent to verify that there are no discrepancies and that there is no fraud,.

B) Interpreting Particular CRA Reports

1. Experian

Experian has a sample credit report that explains each section of the credit report which can be found at <http://www.experian.com/assets/credit-education/brochures/sample-credit-report.pdf>

2. TransUnion

TransUnion credit reports have the following 7 topic areas:

- Personal information: name, date since the person has been on their files, social security number, date of birth and telephone number, employment data reported.
- Account Information: explains how they list the payment history that is reported to TransUnion.
- Satisfactory Accounts: Lists accounts that have no adverse information. This section will identify the agency, and a portion of the account number, balance, date updated, high balance, credit limit, last payment, pay status, account type, responsibility, terms, and date opened. Additionally there is a record of late payments and the payment history.
- Regular Inquiries: The names and addresses of companies that have received the credit report within the last two years. This section gives the date the report was requested and what the inquiry type is.
- Account Review Inquiries: Provides the names and addresses of companies and the date that have obtained information from the credit report for the purpose of an account review or other business.
- Credit Report Messages: Messages from the credit reporting agency, TransUnion.
- Consumer Rights: Explains the rights of a consumer under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

3. Equifax

The Equifax credit report is divided into nine areas and allows the user to click on the blue words to get an explanation of the word or topic. There is an explanation after each topic area which gives tips to increase credit and/or what the section is reporting. If you click on the words in blue in the first section it will take you to that section of the report. The topic areas are as follows:

- Credit summary: Lists the account types that a person may have, mortgage, installment, revolving, and other, as well as the age of the account, the newest and oldest accounts of the consumer. This includes the names of companies that have inquired about the consumers credit history, if there is any negative information regarding the consumer's credit. Potentially negative information gives an overview of late payments, accounts that are in collection status and public records.
- Account information: Is detailed information about each open and closed account that the consumer has. After the name, address, and telephone number of the company is the account number, the type of account, the credit limit, term duration of the loan or

account, when the payments are due, and the status.

- After each account is an 81 month payment history. There is a payment history key after all of the accounts are listed that explains what the symbol, numbers or letters mean in the 81 month payment history.
 - For a 16 and 17 year old, this section should not have any content.
 - For an 18 to 21 year old, it is important to review the section, which states if the account is paid as agreed or is delinquent, with the adolescent to ensure that the status of the account is accurate. The other areas to review are the name of the company, credit amount, date opened/closed, balance, and date of first delinquency. If the account is paid off and closed it will be noted next to “Activity Designator”.
- Inquiries: Identifies the name, address and telephone number or the company(s) that have requested your credit report as well as the date of the inquiry. These inquiries are made by companies that the consumer has applied for a loan or credit.
- Negative information: Is identified as “negative accounts”, which are accounts that are not paid as agreed in the credit agreement or loan. This area also lists any accounts that are in collections, and public records.
- Personal information: name, social security number, age or date of birth and names formerly known as. The current and previous addresses of the consumer and the date. Inquiries: Identifies the name, address and telephone number or the company(s) that have requested your credit report as well as the date of the inquiry. These inquiries are made by companies that the consumer has applied for a loan or credit.
- Negative information: Is identified as “negative accounts”, which are accounts that are not paid as agreed in the credit agreement or loan. This area also lists any accounts that are in collections, and public records.
- Personal information: name, social security number, age or date of birth and names formerly known as. The current and previous addresses of the consumer and the date.

1009.9 Procedures for Correcting or Disputing Information in a Credit Report

8-13-2012

If the Worker discovers that an adolescent’s credit report contains misinformation or indicators of identity theft, the Worker shall take the following steps on the youth’s behalf to prevent further harm. The Worker shall maintain detailed written notes on steps taken.

A. Identifying and correcting inaccuracies/discrepancies

Credit reports may contain erroneous information. Even seemingly harmless mistakes such as misspelled names or incorrect addresses may be detrimental to a person’s credit rating, and could be indicative of identity theft or other serious problems. All incorrect information should be reported to the credit bureau **and** the DCF Office of Legal Affairs if there is any suspicion of fraudulent activity such as identity thefts.

B. Contact the CRAs

Contact the three nationwide credit reporting agencies. Explain that the child is a minor and

cannot legally enter into any type of contract. To prove that the child is a minor, send the credit reporting agencies a copy of the child's birth certificate or other documentation of age, such as a court order, and a letter asking them to remove all accounts, application inquiries, and collection notices from the credit report associated with the child's name or personal information. Documentation may also be needed to verify that the youth is in foster care and the agency is authorized to act of the youth's behalf.

C. Place an initial fraud alert

If a credit report was created for the child as a result of identity theft, consider placing an initial fraud alert on the report. An initial fraud alert requires potential creditors to verify a person's identity before extending credit. When a creditor knows that a minor child is involved, it will not ordinarily extend credit.

To place an initial fraud alert, contact any one of the three credit reporting agencies. The company that you call must contact the other two. All three will place the initial fraud alert on the report they have for the child. After you place the initial fraud alert, the credit reporting company will explain your rights, including your right to get a free credit report from each credit reporting company.

D. Consider a credit freeze

If there is a credit report for the child, you can also consider placing a credit freeze. If you place a credit freeze (also known as a security freeze), potential creditors cannot get the child's credit report, which makes it less likely an identity thief can open new accounts. You must contact each of the three credit reporting agencies directly to place a freeze. The credit reporting agencies may ask for proof of the child's Social Security number, proof that you are legally able to represent the child's legal representative, and a copy of the child's birth certificate. Putting a freeze on a minor's credit report can be a useful deterrent to additional fraud.

You must lift the freeze from the credit report before the minor child applies for student or auto loans, an apartment, or job. Once the child turns age 18, he/she can ask to lift the freeze him or herself.

Although businesses do not ordinarily extend credit to a minor, you also should consider placing an extended fraud alert - which lasts for seven years - on the credit report. When a business sees an alert on a credit report, it must verify the borrower's identity before issuing credit. Identity theft victims - including children and youth in foster care - can have an extended alert placed on their credit reports if they can provide an Identity Theft Report to the credit reporting company.

What It Is	What It Does	How to Get It	What it Costs	How Long It Lasts
Initial fraud alert	Requires creditors to verify an identity before granting credit and makes it harder for a thief to open fraudulent new accounts.	Contact one credit reporting company. It will share your request with the other two agencies.	Free	90 days
Initial fraud alert	Requires creditors to verify an identity before granting credit and makes it harder for a thief to open fraudulent new accounts.	Contact one credit reporting company. It will share your request with the other two agencies.	Free	90 days
Extended fraud alert	Requires creditors to verify an identity before granting credit and makes it harder for a thief to open fraudulent new accounts.	Contact one credit reporting company. It will share your request with the other two agencies.	Free	7 years
Credit freeze	Stops creditors from getting your credit report unless you lift the freeze.	Contact each credit reporting company.	Depends on state law	Depends on state law

1009.10 Resources for more information

8-13-2012

- The ONLY official web site established by the three CRAs to provide FREE credit reports is, AnnualCreditReport.com
- The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is responsible for protecting consumer rights. Information is available at ftc.gov or by calling toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).
- CP&P Form 16-110, Credit Reports Form for Adolescents Age 18 to 21

