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# YAB BLAST

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Summer 2021 Edition

Brought to you by the  
Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board

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## County Shout Outs

We would like to recognize the Northeast region for their community engagement efforts. The Valley Youth House typically volunteers at a local nursing home, however, due to COVID restrictions they were unable to be in person this year. This group did not let that stop them from “showing up”. Youth created greeting cards, which were laminated in order to be long-lasting. Residents of the nursing home were surprised with their greeting cards, as they were placed at their dinner tables. Here are a few of the cards they made. Way to spread some spring cheer!



## 2021 Graduates

**Bristen** – Graduated from Lackawanna Trail High School and also completed CTC certified in cosmetology. Bristen will be going straight into the workforce.

**Jacob** – Graduated from Carbondale School District and has committed to Keystone College.

**Joustin** – Graduated from West Scranton High School.

**Kion & Kierstyn** – Graduated from Valley View High School, Kierstyn has committed to Penn State University Scranton. Kion has committed to Indiana University of PA.

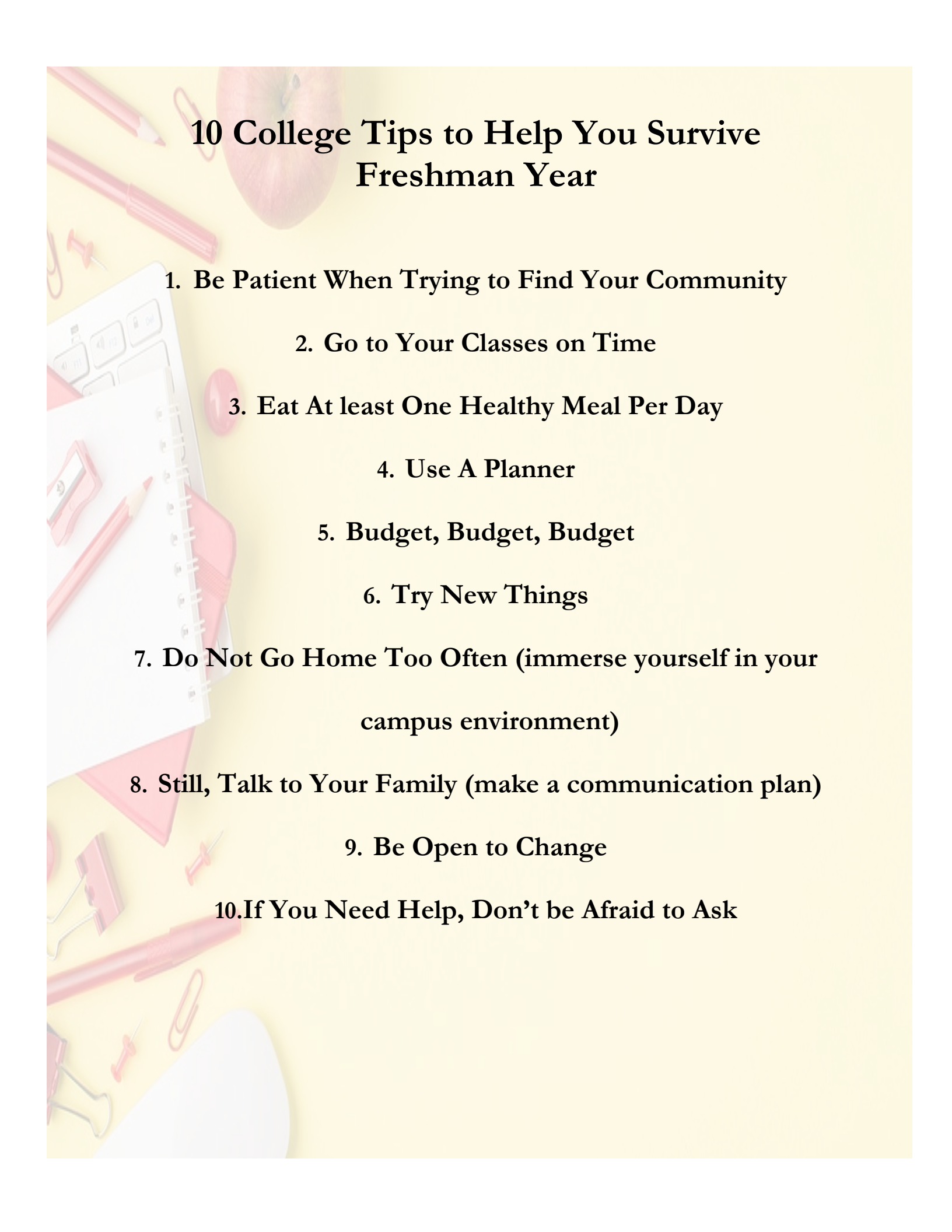
**Sydney** – Graduated from Old Forge High School and has joined the Air Force.

**Noah** – Graduated from George Jr. and will be attending Westmoreland County Community College Fall Semester. Noah is interested in Culinary Arts, Business, and Therapy.

**Alyvia** – Graduated from Indiana Area School District. Alyvia has been accepted to Indiana University of PA and plans major in education during the fall.

**Kayla and Tiyana** - Graduates of the Commonwealth Charter Academy. Kayla will be attending Lincoln University, while Tiyana will be attending West Chester University.

*“Your life is your story, and the adventure ahead of you is the journey to fulfill your own purpose and potential.” - Kerry Washington*



## **10 College Tips to Help You Survive Freshman Year**

- 1. Be Patient When Trying to Find Your Community**
- 2. Go to Your Classes on Time**
- 3. Eat At least One Healthy Meal Per Day**
- 4. Use A Planner**
- 5. Budget, Budget, Budget**
- 6. Try New Things**
- 7. Do Not Go Home Too Often (immerse yourself in your campus environment)**
- 8. Still, Talk to Your Family (make a communication plan)**
- 9. Be Open to Change**
- 10.If You Need Help, Don't be Afraid to Ask**

# Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program

The Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program, created by Act 16 of 2019, seeks to remove barriers in accessing a postsecondary education for youth who are or have been in foster care. This will allow eligible foster youth to complete their studies, graduate with less debt, and have the opportunity to build a network of support. The program is being administered collaboratively by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) in conjunction with the PA departments of Education, Human Services, and Labor & Industry!

## Am I Eligible?

To be eligible for the tuition waiver, students must meet the following criteria:

- Be a Pennsylvania resident
- Be under age 26
- Received a high school diploma or equivalent approved credential
- Be eligible for services under Pennsylvania's John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood
- Be identified as a youth in foster care or a youth discharged from foster care at age 16 or older
- Exited foster care on or after age 16 to adoption or permanent legal custodianship
- Be enrolled as an undergraduate, at least half time in a postsecondary institution that is approved by the U.S. Department of Education for Title IV student assistance programs
- Demonstrate financial need for the PA Chafee Education and Training Grant (Chafee ETG), as determined by the postsecondary institution
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the postsecondary institution
- Not be in default on a federal student loan.

Visit the [Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver Program Website](#) for more details.

# Being Safe on Campus

We are heading back to school pretty soon! For those of you who already know your way around the campus and for those experiencing life on campus for first time, we want to encourage you to be safe. According to Someplace Safe Crime Victim Services of Minnesota, gender-based violence is a concern on campuses and incoming freshman are at higher risk of victimization during their first few months of school. If you don't think it's a big deal, take a look at the following statistics of sexual assault against college students:

- **11.2%** of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force or violence.
- Among undergraduate students, **23.1%** of females and **5.4%** of males experience rape or sexual assault.
- Male college students ages 18-24 are **78%** more likely than same age non-students to be a victim of rape or sexual assault.
- **21%** of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming) college students have been sexually assaulted.
- More than **50%** of college sexual assaults occur in either August, September, October, or November.”

**Hopefully, these facts have encouraged you to prioritize your safety. Below are tips to help keep you safe!**

**Know your resources.** It's great to know where to locate your campus security, campus health center, and emergency phones. **Stay alert.** Simply be aware of your surroundings. **Be careful about posting your location. Think about using a Plan B.** This means having emergency cash, having important phone numbers memorized, having a backup plan in case you get into sticky situations. **Be secure.** Lock your doors & windows. **Make a plan.** Go to places with people you trust. **Protect your drink.** Never leave your drink unattended. Watch the person making your drink. **It's okay to make an excuse.** If you need to leave a situation make an excuse to do so. Don't compromise your safety by worrying how others will feel. **Be a good friend.** Trust your instincts.

**Use this website to read more about these tips above: [someplacesafe.info](https://someplacesafe.info)**

# The Consolidated Appropriations Act

**Children's Bureau**

**UNDER THE AGE OF 27 AND SPENT TIME IN FOSTER CARE AFTER TURNING 14?**

*You may be eligible for time-limited, Federal pandemic relief funds to help with things like*

rent • food • utilities • child care • clothing • car payments

For more information contact your caseworker or [www.childwelfare.gov/youthpandemicsupport](http://www.childwelfare.gov/youthpandemicsupport)

**Child Welfare Information Gateway**  
PROTECTING CHILDREN • STRENGTHENING RESULTS

On December 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act. Division X, sections 3 & 4, of the Consolidated Appropriation Act provides supplemental Chafee funding and program flexibilities to current and former Chafee eligible foster youth as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the needs of youth and young adults. Here is what that may mean for you:

- Allows youth to voluntarily remain in care past the age limitation of 21 and continue to receive the same services and supports through September 30, 2021.
- Allows youth who left care between January 27, 2020 – January 20, 2021, to voluntarily re-enter care through September 30, 2021. Resumption of jurisdiction may be required.
- Youth are not required to meet the education or employment requirements to remain in or re-enter care through September 30, 2021.
- The age for services and supports, including ETG (Education & Training Grant), increased to include youth and young adults through age 26 or until their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday.



# The Consolidated Appropriations Act (cont'd)

- The law allows states to increase the maximum Chafee Education & Training Grant (ETG) from \$5,000 to \$12,000 through September 30, 2022. PA is not able to increase the award amount above \$5,000 due to the number of students enrolled in postsecondary education.
- Allows states to waive the requirements of being enrolled in or making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in postsecondary education or training (i.e., college or trade school) to be eligible for ETG. PA is waiving the SAP and being enrolled at least half time through September 30, 2021. Youth must be enrolled in a postsecondary institution or trade school to be eligible for ETG.
- Counties are now able to utilize more of their Chafee funding to assist eligible youth with housing needs.

For more information or assistance, please contact your IL Coordinator/worker. If you are unable to connect with an IL worker, please contact the state IL & ETV Coordinator.

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You can visit the following websites for more information regarding these changes.

- <https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=222&sectionid=1&articleid=5725>
- <http://partnersforourchildren.org/blog/consolidated-appropriations-act-2021-signed-law-12272020>
- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/youthpandemicsupport/>

# National Foster Care Awareness Month

May is National Foster care month. The theme for 2021 is “Foster Care as a Support to Families, not a Substitute for Parents.” The Children’s Bureau and the Child Welfare Information Gateway provided resources such as engagement tools to foster “connectedness between youth, families, and resource parents.” Along with tools to promote reunifying families and establishing permanency. National Foster care month is also important to the leaders of our country as they seek ways to establish policies that promote healthy families. Below is the 2021 Presidential Proclamation:

“Every child deserves to grow up in a supportive, loving home where they can thrive and prosper. During those unfortunate times when children cannot remain safely in their own homes, the individuals and families who open their hearts and homes to foster children provide a vital service to their communities. During this National Foster Care Month, we share our gratitude for those who support youth and families by being a resource to children in need and supporting birth parents so that they may safely reunite with their families whenever possible. We also recognize that it takes collaboration and community effort — from local organizations to Federal agencies — to support children, birth parents, and resource and kin families during challenging times.” - President Joe Biden

The PA Youth Advisory Board takes this time to recognize all who are committed to youth in care. We thank you for your support. To youth in care, we take the time to offer support and encouragement. We employ you to practice self-learning and self-advocacy. It is important to know your rights while in care. It’s equally important to speak in spaces where decisions are being made that ultimately impact your life. Your voice matters. You matter.



# Mental Health Note

In addition to Foster Care Awareness, May is also the national mental health awareness month. During this time, mental health advocates and people across the country participate in raising awareness about the prevalence of mental health in our society. Mental health organizations provide campaigns to reduce stigma, encourage support, and prioritize normalizing mental health conversations. The impact of COVID-19, national injustices, and day-to-day life can take a toll on positive mental health. Below are just a few ways to boost positive mental health.

- **Talk about your feelings!** Talking with someone you trust is a great coping method. Being listened to can help you feel supported and affirms you don't have to deal with your issues alone.
- **Stay active!** It has been proven that exercise including taking a walk, jogging, swimming, or even dancing reduces anxiety and depression.
- **Practice Self-Care!** Carve out time in your daily schedule to do something just for you. If you are engaged in something that's taking a lot of time, such as a school project or work, be sure to step away for some fresh air. This is a great way to boost your mental state.
- **Disappear!** Okay, seriously DON'T go missing. However, disconnecting from your phone and other technology is a great way to destress. Take a break from the constant alerts, emails, social media and connect with someone face-to-face or do something you love.
- **Don't want to talk it out? WRITE it out!** Writing your thoughts and journaling is a great tool to reduce stress and boosting your mood. Journaling before bed can help you unwind and relax.

**Remember: your mental health is just as important as your physical health!**

If you are experiencing a crisis or know someone who is, you can get immediate support. You can get peer support by calling 1-877-YOUTHLINE or live chat by visiting by [HTTP://WWW.HOPELINE.COM/](http://www.hopeLine.com/). You can also Text HOME to 741741 for crisis support.



# Summer Fun & Safety Tips

**Summer is in full effect and the heat is turning up!**

It is very important to bear in mind the importance of sun protection for the skin. For those with higher levels of melanin, the idea that you do not need sun protection also has to be changed! In fact, sun protection is just as important to you as it is to those with a lighter skin complexion. Health experts advise everyone, regardless of skin color, to use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30. Although people with a darker complexion won't get sunburned as quickly, they still burn and are susceptible to sun-induced damage such as sunspots, wrinkles, and cancer!

**Here are a few tips to take care of your skin while having fun in the sun!**

- 1. Avoid the sun during peak hours of 10am – 2 pm.**
- 2. Seek shade.**
- 3. Wear clothing with UPF protection (ultraviolet protection factor). UPF 50+ helps block 98% of UVA/UVB rays.**
- 4. Always apply sunscreen at least 15 minutes before going outdoors, even on a cloudy day. It takes approximately 15 minutes for your skin to absorb the sunscreen and protect you.**
- 5. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen which protects you from both UVA and UVB rays.**
- 6. Use sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher.**
- 7. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours and after swimming or excessive sweating.**
- 8. Be sure to apply sunscreen to vulnerable areas such as ears, neck, lips, and top of feet.**
- 9. Take sunscreen with you wherever you go.**
- 10. Do not use expired products.**

**P.S. It is also important to keep your body hydrated, so don't forget to drink plenty of water!**

# Juneteenth

 FREEDOM DAY

On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden officially made June 19<sup>th</sup>, known as “Juneteenth,” a federal holiday! But what is its significance and, furthermore, what is Juneteenth? Well, let’s go back to the mid-1800’s. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. This decreed that all enslaved people “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” However, the state of Texas continued slavery practices and did not free the enslaved people. Slave owners from other states where slavery was banned even relocated to Texas, as they believed slavery would still be enforced. In fact, it wouldn’t be for another two years that slaves in Texas would receive the news that they were free. General Gordon Granger and Northern troops rode into Galveston to not only inform slaves of their freedom, but to also enforce President Lincoln’s Proclamation. The day this occurred was on June 19, 1865. On June 19, 1866, freedmen in Texas organized the first “Juneteenth” event, which became known as “Jubilee Day.” In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday. So, how do you celebrate the holiday? Well, this day is filled with music from Black artists and the singing of the Black National Anthem. Music is enjoyed at barbeques, attending religious services, and supporting black owned businesses. Also, check your local events, which may have Juneteenth events that you can attend.

**You can learn more about Juneteenth by watching this video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FX-Iisvrj8>

**You can also watch how Juneteenth is celebrated with food by checking out this following video:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVVwP\\_o4YLw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVVwP_o4YLw)

# National Pride Month

The month of June marks the month-long celebration of what is known as “Pride Month.” Pride month honors the 1969 Stonewall Riots. The riots were the starting point of Gay Liberation in America. All across the nation, individuals and allies of the LGBTQIA+ community come together to celebrate. Parades are hosted to foster self-acceptance and achievements made by the LGBTQIA+ community. Parades also provide a platform to speak out for equality and legal rights. In addition to parades, memorials are held for those lost to hate crimes. While celebrating or preparing to celebrate this month, here are a few things you should know:

- LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer. You may see an extension of this to include I & A, which stand for intersex and asexual.
- The Pride flag, inspired by the rainbow, is intended to reflect the many groups in the gay community.
- It’s just as important for allies to participate in Pride month events. This shows support for the community and is an opportunity to listen to stories and become more educated.
- Learn more about this community and things that are helpful or harmful to those within it.

As a youth, you can visit <https://itgetsbetter.org/> to take a pledge to speak up against hate. Also, look for more LGBTQIA+ resources on the PA YAB Facebook page.



# Peaceful Protesting Tips

Across the nation, communities are still coming together to advocate for equality and social justice. People are taking to the streets, protesting and raising awareness about police brutality, racism, and other social issues. Protesting is a powerful tool that can impact change and you may want to get involved. However, before you hit the streets, there are a few things you need to do to prepare yourself. Below are some tips to keep you safe and ensure you can protest effectively.

## Things You Should Do Before

- \* Educate yourself on the subject! You need to understand what you are protesting for or against.
- \* You should realize that it is not about you.
- \* Make sure you are in the right mindset and prepare yourself for how you will handle heightened emotions.
- \* Examine your health. If you are sick stay home!
- \* Know your rights! It is important to understand your First Amendment rights. Visit this website to learn more about protesters' rights. <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights/>

## What You Should Bring to a Protest

- \* A buddy! There is safety in numbers.
- \* A bag or bookbag
- \* Water
- \* A mask or bandana
- \* Snacks
- \* Protesting signs
- \* Wear appropriate clothing
- \* Hand sanitizers
- \* A form of identification

## While You Are at a Protest

- \* Mask up & stay socially distanced!
- \* Stay alert & study your surroundings!
- \* Consider the ethics of taking photos!
- \* Help those around you!
- \* Never leave the people you came with!
- \* Also, remember police officers are there to keep everyone safe!

According to Keith Taylor, an adjunct assistant professor and former New York City police officer said Police have an “overarching responsibility to keep the community safe while allowing the protests to go on in a reasonable manner.”

**For more information on how to safely protest visit:**  
[www.wired.com/story/how-to-protest-safely-gear-tips/](http://www.wired.com/story/how-to-protest-safely-gear-tips/)

# National Resources

## Mental Health

National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Crisis Text Hotline- Text HOME to 741741

## Housing

Homeless National Hotline 1-800-786-2929

National Youth & Teen Runaway Hotline 1-800-Runaway

## Health & Safety

National Domestic Violence Support Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE

National STD Hotline 1-800-227-8922

## Legal Support

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network 1-800-322-7572



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