

Southampton Fresh Air Home
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USA



Home Away from Home Program



www.sfah.org



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Home Away from Home Program

Purpose

The Home Away From Home (HAFH) Program supports young people with physical disabilities as they transition into adulthood by building independent living skills, career readiness, and confidence. Through levels of progression, participants develop practical skills, explore leadership, and gain mentorship while remaining connected to the SFAH community.

Core Program Elements

- **Summer Leadership Program:** Alumni of all levels participate during the summer, taking on structured roles part of the day and enjoying the benefits of being at camp. They gain leadership, job-readiness, and teamwork skills while mentoring peers and SFAH participants.
- **HAFH Overnight Weekends:** Life skill labs and S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting in areas like personal care, career planning, and independent living. S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) helps individuals define goals that are well-defined, trackable, realistic, and time-sensitive, increasing the likelihood of success.
- **Travel Readiness Program:** Alumni learn to navigate public transportation and para-transit systems while using mobility devices, gaining independence in safely reaching destinations.
- **Everyday Independence Program:** Real-world experiences where alumni practice budgeting, shopping, advocacy, and navigating city environments.

Program Benefits

- Builds independence step by step through a leveled approach.
- Provides real-world practice in cooking, budgeting, transportation, and advocacy.
- Connects individuals at different points in their journey, reinforcing mentorship and leadership.
- Keeps alumni engaged with SFAH year-round while preparing them for adult life.

How the Levels Work

The Home Away From Home program uses a 4-level system to make sure every participant gets the right balance of support and responsibility. Each level reflects a participant's age, maturity, life experience, independence, and readiness for the next step.

- **Level 1 (Entry)** is for younger alumni who are beginning their independence journey. They learn routines, personal care, and self-advocacy with consistent guidance.
- **Level 2 (Intermediate)** is for alumni building confidence. They take more initiative, practice using transportation, and strengthen job-readiness skills with structured support.
- **Level 3 (Advanced)** is for those who are more experienced and reliable. They mentor younger peers, manage responsibilities with minimal oversight, and prepare for career or education pathways.
- **Level 4 (Graduate)** is for alumni who are highly independent and actively preparing for adult life. They support staff, model independence, and demonstrate readiness for jobs, college, or housing.

Why this matters for parents:

- Levels ensure participants are challenged appropriately without being overwhelmed.
- Progression shows steady growth from learning routines to full independence.
- The system allows staff to meet each participant where they are while encouraging them to take the next step toward adulthood.

How are the Levels defined?

Level

1

Entry-Level

Maturity & Readiness: Participants at this level are beginning their journey toward independence. They are learning to follow routines, practice self-advocacy, and adjust to responsibilities outside of their past camper experience. They are usually younger alumni with limited independent living experience.

Responsibilities: Participants explore self-advocacy by practicing speaking up for their needs and attend introductory independence workshops while at camp.

Goals: Participants show interest in leadership and job exploration, begin using para-transit or similar supports with guidance, and demonstrate the ability to self-advocate without parents present.

Level

2

Intermediate

Maturity & Readiness: Participants at this level are willing to take initiative and are actively building their independence skills. They are able to follow through on assigned tasks with some structure and support.

Responsibilities: Participants serve as alumni mentors, set and work on S.M.A.R.T. goals, and practice using public transportation with regular support.

Goals to Advance: Participants complete daily responsibilities independently, advocate for their own goals and needs within the community, and consistently show effort in strengthening independence skills.

Level

3

Advanced

Maturity & Readiness: Participants at this level have developed stronger independence skills. They are ready to practice career-related responsibilities with minimal supervision and are beginning to plan ahead for adult life.

Responsibilities: Participants volunteer part-time hours at SFAH during the summer, actively build career development skills, and set and work toward financial goals.

Goals to Advance: Participants manage tasks with minimal direction, travel across counties with limited support, and demonstrate readiness to apply for housing, jobs, or further education opportunities.

Level

4

Graduate

Maturity & Readiness: Participants are highly independent and preparing for adult life through jobs, college, or vocational programs. They know when and how to reach out for support.

Responsibilities: Participants mentor younger levels, act as additional staff for programs, and supervise activities across camp.

Goals for Graduation: Participants secure or pursue employment or education, prepare to live independently, and travel confidently across counties.

Levels Explained

Level 1: Getting Started



At **Level 1**, participants begin learning the basics of independence in a supportive, hands-on way. With guidance from mentors, they explore what independence looks like in small, manageable steps.

Skills and Goals

- Sign up for county para-transit services (Access-A-Ride, Able Ride, SCAT).
- Practice speaking up for themselves with friends and family.
- Shop with support to start building money-handling skills.
- Show interest in future work opportunities.
- Gain awareness of what independent living involves, like care management, housing, and costs.



Level 2: Building Confidence



At **Level 2**, participants take on more responsibility. They practice independence in real-world settings while still having support when needed.

Skills and Goals

- Book and use county para-transit services independently.
- Order food or interact with service workers without prompting.
- Shop on their own with a list.
- Create a resume with at least one non-family reference.
- Set realistic goals for independence and create a personal timeline.



Levels Explained Cont.

Level 3: Stepping Up



At **Level 3**, participants who have aged out of the summer program step into leadership. They act as mentors for camp participants while building their own independent living and career skills.

Skills and Goals

- Use multiple para-transit systems to travel across county lines.
- Navigate public transportation with minimal support.
- Advocate for themselves in public without relying on family or friends.
- Create and follow a budget, including shopping lists.
- Build basic cooking and home-maintenance routines.
- Enroll in a post-secondary, certificate, or vocational program aligned with goals.
- Develop a clear independent living plan with solutions for obstacles.

Level 4: Independent & Thriving



At **Level 4**, participants are preparing for, or are already living independently. The focus is on maintaining consistency, problem-solving, and fine-tuning advocacy skills.

Skills and Goals

- Confidently navigate para-transit systems across multiple counties, including reservations.
- Use multiple types of public transportation independently (bus, subway, train, ferry).
- Manage a budget regularly and shop independently for all needs.
- Rotate a set of personal recipes for independent cooking.
- Maintain a home or living space independently.
- Demonstrate readiness for full-time employment, advanced education, or independent housing.

Measuring Progress and Level Placement

How the Process Works

Step 1 - Skills Are Evaluated:

Staff review skills across seven categories of independence.

Step 2 - Scores Are Calculated

Each skill receives a score from 1 to 5. Scores across the categories combine into an overall score.

Step 3 - Level Placement Is Determined:

Scores place each participant within a Home Away From Home program level. Levels reflect current independence and responsibility.

Step 4 - Goals & Action Steps:

Each participant receives a Development Report. This report explains current strengths and outlines goals that build independence and improve scores.

Skills Categories for Assessments



Career and
Workplace Readiness



Emotional Regulation
and Resilience



Independence and
Daily Living Skills



Self Advocacy and
Communication



Leadership, Mentorship,
and Initiative



Community Navigation
and Travel Readiness



Future Planning, Action,
and Follow Through

Scoring Meaning

Score	Score Meaning
1	Skill not been taught or practiced yet. Requires full guidance.
2	Skill has been introduced. Requires frequent support.
3	Skill practiced with support. Still building consistency.
4	Skill used independently in familiar settings.
5	Skill mastered across settings and supports others.

Scores determine program level and guide independence goals

Level Placement Guide

Level	Level Description
1	Learning Foundations
2	Building Independence
3	Practicing Leadership
4	Mentoring Others

Essential Life Skills for Independence

This list shows the everyday skills that make life easier and help participants feel more independent. It includes things like cooking, managing money, cleaning, staying safe, and speaking up for themselves. These skills matter because they prepare participants for real-world situations, whether that's living on their own, working a job, or handling emergencies. This list can be used to pick goals, practice new skills, and see how much participants have grown over time.

ADULTING

- Grocery shopping (in-store and online orders)
- Online shopping basics (returns, exchanges, scams to avoid)
- Laundry (washing, drying, stain removal, folding)
- Cooking simple, balanced meals
- Digital document storage (password managers, cloud storage)
- Applying for government ID/passport online
- Email and text etiquette (professional vs. casual)
- Understanding health insurance basics and co-pays
- Scheduling medical and personal appointments (phone, online portals, apps)
- Home basics: unclogging drains, changing lightbulbs, safe cleaning practices

INTERPERSONAL

- Conflict resolution in-person and online (social media, group chats, text misunderstandings)
- Using shared calendars and reminders (Google, Apple, etc.)
- Writing thank-you emails/messages (beyond letters)
- Planning a group hangout or event (budget, schedule, RSVPs)
- Hosting inclusive gatherings (dietary needs, accessibility awareness)
- Setting and respecting boundaries

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Decision-making in real-world scenarios ("What would you do?")
- Tipping norms (restaurants, apps like Uber Eats, Instacart, etc.)
- Habit-building with apps (streaks, trackers, accountability tools)
- SMART goal setting for school, work, and personal life
- Personal hygiene and self-care routines
- Packing for travel (carry-ons, accessibility tools, chargers, meds)
- Identifying reliable online resources vs. misinformation
- Navigating with GPS apps (Google Maps, Apple Maps, Transit apps)
- Situational awareness in public spaces and online safety
- Asking for help (teachers, employers, doctors, peers)
- Self-defense basics and digital safety (strong passwords, avoiding scams)
- Knowing personal legal rights (ADA, workplace/school accommodations)

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

- How to vote (in-person, mail-in, accessible voting options)
- Understanding Social Security Number uses and protecting it
- Booking travel (flights, trains, hotels, rideshares, accessible travel requests)
- Troubleshooting internet and Wi-Fi issues
- Basic first aid and when to call for help

Essential Life Skills for Independence cont.

SOCIALIZATION

- Using common digital tools (Zoom, Google Docs, Canva, social media apps responsibly)
- Phone/video call etiquette
- Contacting customer service via chat, email, or phone
- Small talk in different settings (school, work, social)
- Introducing yourself professionally (elevator pitch)
- Group work etiquette (in-person and virtual teamwork)
- Apologies that feel sincere and rebuilding trust
- Accepting feedback and constructive criticism
- Public speaking and presentations (in-person and virtual)
- Managing emotions, stress, and burnout
- Digital etiquette (social media posting, group texts, online respect)

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Paying bills (online, autopay, budgeting apps)
- Digital banking (debit/credit, Venmo/PayPal/CashApp safety)
- Writing checks (rare, but still needed occasionally)
- Creating and sticking to a budget
- Comparing prices (in-store, online, subscriptions)
- Understanding credit scores, credit cards, and debt basics
- Using an ATM and mobile deposit features

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

- Mobility device maintenance (chairs, scooters, etc.)
- Ordering medical supplies and managing refills
- Advocating for accessibility (school, work, public spaces, online tools)
- Using assistive tech (voice-to-text, screen readers, accessibility features on phones/apps)

FOOD & COOKING

- Cooking easy meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner basics)
- Meal planning and grocery list prep
- Cutting fruits and vegetables safely
- Using kitchen appliances: oven, stovetop, microwave, toaster
- Kitchen safety (hot surfaces, knives, fire prevention)
- Reading and understanding food expiration dates
- Practicing portioning and balanced meals
- Storing food properly (fridge, freezer, pantry)

HOME MANAGEMENT

- Cleaning rooms and common spaces
- Vacuuming and dusting
- Cleaning floors and appliances
- Unclogging toilets and drains safely
- Using basic tools (hammer, screwdriver, wrench)
- Changing batteries in electronics and alarms
- Setting up and maintaining a safe, accessible living space

EMERGENCY PLANNING

- Building an emergency kit and go-bag (meds, chargers, documents)
- Calling 911 and knowing what to say
- Accident procedures (car, home, or public place)
- How to safely interact with police or first responders
- Online emergency prep (contacts in phone, medical ID apps, backup chargers)

Summer Leadership Program

The Summer Leadership Program gives young adults who have aged out of camp the chance to grow as leaders while staying connected to the SFAH community. Participants mentor SFAH participants, complete projects linked to their interests, and support daily camp life by helping in bunks, supervise campers, sorting laundry, and assisting staff.

The program is for those ready to take on responsibility and separate their new role from their past camper experience. The focus is making sure the individuals of the traditional summer program have the best experience while participants build leadership and job-readiness skills.

Goals:

- Lead through mentorship and active roles
- Build workplace skills in a safe, supportive setting
- Grow self-awareness, initiative, and teamwork
- Balance structure with social and personal growth

Additional Program Benefits:

- Priority access to HAFH programs and mentorship
- Daily guidance and goal-setting with directors
- Opportunities to join special camper programs and events
- Stipend for summer contributions

Impact:

- Builds leadership, independence, and job-readiness that transfer beyond camp.
- Ensures current campers have the best camp experience while participants grow into mentors and role models.



Summer Leadership Program Cont.

Summer Leadership Levels:

Participants are placed in a level based on maturity, experience, age, and independence. Each level offers the right balance of support and responsibility, with opportunities to grow throughout the summer.

Level 1

- **Goal:** Learn basic work expectations and follow a routine with support.
- Paired with a mentor (Level 3 or 4).
- Joins leadership in one activity period daily.
- Focus: teamwork, listening to directions, and exploring interests in a guided setting.

Level 2

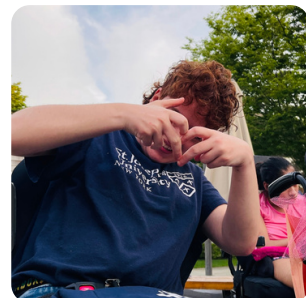
- **Goal:** Show initiative and complete tasks with more independence.
- Paired with a mentor (Level 3 or 4).
- Joins leadership in one activity period daily.
- Focus: practicing responsibility, building confidence, and strengthening teamwork skills.

Level 3

- **Goal:** Take on steady leadership, mentor younger participants, and build a record of responsibilities.
- Supports or mentors Level 1 or 2 participants.
- Leads during one activity period daily.
- Focus: leadership growth, reliability, and skill-building for future resumes.

Level 4

- **Goal:** Operate at near-employment level by managing tasks independently and leading peers.
- Mentors lower levels and helps guide group projects.
- Leads during one activity period daily.
- Focus: independence, problem-solving, and preparing for real-world roles.



HAFH Overnight Weekends

Area	First Session	Multiple Sessions
Purpose	Introduction to independence and S.M.A.R.T. goals in a supportive peer setting.	Builds on prior weekends with continued practice, reflection, and growth.
Goal Setting	Learn what S.M.A.R.T. goals are and set an initial goal in one key area (care, health, education, living, or connections).	Expand goals across multiple areas, track progress, and refine plans over time.
Leadership & Job Readiness	Assist staff with basic recreational activities for members of the traditional summer program.	Take on greater responsibility, mentor peers, and demonstrate reliability in leadership roles.
Peer Connections	Meet new peers, share goals, and build supportive relationships.	Deepen friendships, grow social confidence, and sustain peer accountability across weekends.
Impact	Lays the foundation for independence and confidence in a safe environment.	Creates long-term growth, consistent guidance, and lasting habits that carry into school, work, and community life.



Travel Readiness Program

Purpose: Helps participants at all levels learn how to safely and confidently travel in their community with the support of an alumni mentor. Focus is on public transportation and para-transit services.

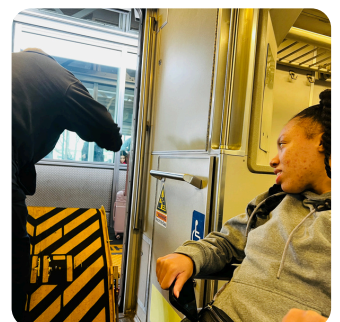
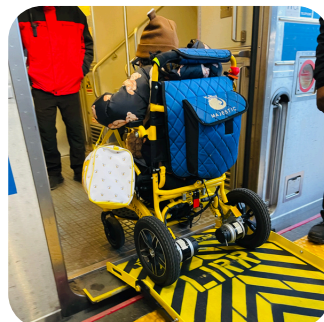
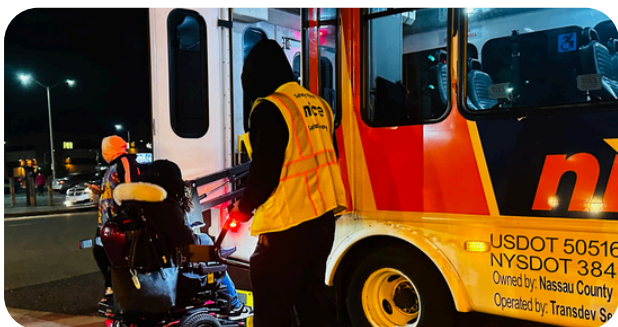
Goal: Give participants the tools to travel independently to social, medical, personal, and professional appointments.

Key Skills Learned:

- Para-Transit Services
 - Reserving trips with accurate details (addresses, times, equipment).
 - Managing payments and using services across different counties.
- Long Island Railroad (LIRR)
 - Checking schedules, buying tickets, and using the LIRR Care Program.
 - Accessing assistance for safe boarding and travel.
- Public Bus
 - Finding bus stops and reading route information.
 - Knowing when and where to get off safely.
- Subway
 - Using accessible routes, elevators, and checking service updates.
 - Reading maps, finding boarding areas, and practicing safety.
- Other Travel Options
 - Overview of Amtrak, Metro-North, and NYC Ferry accessibility and routes.

Impact:

- Builds confidence and independence to travel safely without relying on family or staff.
- Expands access to work, school, healthcare, and social opportunities within the community.



Everyday Independence Program

Purpose: To provide young adults with one-on-one, hands-on opportunities to practice independent living and advocacy skills in real-world settings. Mentors guide participants through daily tasks that build confidence and self-reliance.

Goal: For participants to become independent young adults who can advocate for their needs, manage their care team, and navigate their community with confidence.

Key Focus Areas:

- Shopping and Budgeting
 - Plan, budget, and shop for groceries.
 - Purchase essentials such as clothing, toiletries, and medical supplies.
- Community Interaction
 - Practice how to ask for help and communicate with store staff or community members.
 - Build social confidence and self-advocacy skills.
- Money Management
 - Use money and budgeting skills in real-world environments.
 - Make purchasing decisions with guidance, then practice independently.
- Safe Navigation
 - Learn how to cross busy streets safely and follow traffic rules.
 - Explore local stores and services to feel comfortable navigating the neighborhood.

Impact:

- Builds everyday independence through guided, repeat practice.
- Helps participants gain the confidence to manage responsibilities on their own.
- Ensures skills transfer directly into home, school, and community life.



Who does well in the HAFH Program?

A story of mentorship and self-determination

Parents of young people with disabilities often ask me “how did you get to get to be so independent?”

I was born in the 90s with a ‘rare’ genetic disorder as an only child to a single mother with a huge extended family of able-bodied Hispanic people all with STRONG voices. Most of them vocalized their ideas of the limitations and obstacles that will prevent me from accomplishing my goals. Despite how overwhelmed my mother was with all of these opinions, she always stressed the importance of hard work and dedication to your passions.



Children grow by learning how to decipher life’s expectations. When there are so many opinions, it’s hard to decide which of them are the most valid and in adherence to what you want from own life. In grade school, I met people with a wide range of disabilities, each of whom had their own thoughts on life’s expectations. Each of them indirectly had an impact on the trajectory of my life. My best friend in grade school had the biggest impact. Her cerebral palsy made her wants and desires much harder to obtain. I’d subsequently made it my mission to help her experience life as the rest of us did. I made sure to fill her in on ALL of the pre-teen melodrama while simultaneously feeding her our favorite snacks, writing down her thoughts, and describing the things that were too small for her to see. Our ‘dynamic duo’ helped me realize that we must set the example that we want to see. We aren’t “exceptional” for simply living with a disability nor are we “destined for a life of failures”.

In my teenage years, my vision for my future was clearer. I knew that as long as I was staying true to myself, had a strong support system, and worked hard through it all, I’d be able to live successfully. I’ve surrounded myself with other disabled people who have surpassed their goals including: living independently in another state, completing a PhD, immigrating from a different country. My support system has provided guidance, advice, and encouragement.



I hope that with the Home Away from Home program, young people will gain their support system to live successful and independent lives.



Participant Testimonials

2025 Participating Alumni

“It’s a great program to help impact the campers. I have gained so much more confidence in myself to advocate for my community.” - Nyisha R. (23) - Level 3 Alumni

“This program has helped me figure out who I am as a person, how to approach conflict, and how to advocate for my care needs.” - Christian C. (19) - Level 1 Alumni

“Fully lean into the program. Trust yourself & those who believe in you. My confidence & leadership have grown exponentially. I feel I’m much more inclined to be involved, use my degree & to overall try new things.” - Emma G. (26) - Level 4 Alumni

“This program is an amazing experience. It not only opens a whole new perspective of the camp but it unlocks hidden traits about yourself that you either didn't know you had or haven't used in a long time. It teaches you independence, stepping up for yourself. Doing whatever task is given to you and making connections with the people around you.” - Calvin G. (24) - Level 4 Alumni

“This program can help us evolve in a number of ways while also giving us a chance to feel supported for whatever we may need. I have learned even more about taking on a role and everything it entails, which also helped expand my independence.” - Savannah G. (25) - Level 4 Alumni

“The alumni program is an amazing place to grow. Not only do you find your voice and gain confidence in speaking up, but you also learn a lot about independence and stepping into leadership roles. The program really helps you understand what it’s like to be in a work environment and prepares you for future jobs or responsibilities. You get to practice leading others, sharing your ideas, and just becoming more self-sufficient.” - Emily M. (22) - Level 4 Alumni

“This program is a great opportunity to grow as a person and build important skills. You will learn independence, confidence, and job readiness, while also practicing patience and discipline. It is a place where you can develop leadership, meet new people, and push yourself to do more than you thought you could. The program gives you support but also teaches you how to advocate for yourself and prepare for your future.” - Kamyia R. (24) - Level 4 Alumni

“This program doesn’t only help you with day to day life as an adult with a disability but also this program helps you grow in many ways as a person. Since starting the program I’ve learned more independence and advocating. ” - Francisco O. (23) - Level 3 Alumni

“If you're somebody like me with CP but have good communication skills, know that your strength is in your voice, not in what you can do physically. On the other hand, when you're having a hard time, talking to the other alumni, or Kiara, or Emma has definitely made me feel like the Alumni program is like a family that comes together to support each other.” - Jerel J. (21) - Level 1 Alumni

“As an alumni employee, being able to be a living example that having a disability doesn’t stop you from being a contributing member of society while bringing smiles to these individuals has been such a rewarding feeling. Thankful to be a part of this amazing program.” - Jessica L. (32) - Alumni Employee

Additional Resources



www.sfah.org

A great place to start

After Campfire Podcast

The camps podcast, featuring many previous staff will give you a real sense of who we are and what we do

Instagram:
[@sfah_1901](https://www.instagram.com/sfah_1901)

Where you can see photos, reels, videos, and flyers showing fun activities, laughter, and events!

Facebook:
Southampton Fresh Air Home

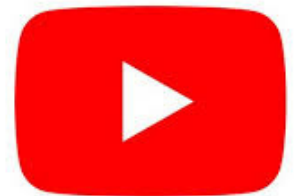
Find more information about our community and events.

Zoom

Meet our directors and staff, get to know how your child will fit into camp, ask us any questions.

You Tube:
Southampton Fresh Air Home

Find videos from our summers, events, and travel information.



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