

# *Families First Success Story*

## *Independent Living: young man builds foundation for healthy living*



*Private First Class Combat Medic, college student, registered EMT and single parent, Clark aspires to become a Physician's Assistant*

**Name:** Clark

**Crisis Situation:** Clark's childhood would be unimaginable for most people. His mother died when he was just eight years old and his father was unavailable to care for him. After being abused by relative caregivers, Clark became ward of the State at the age of 11, and placed in protective custody for the remainder of his youth. Having spent most of his life in State care, Clark never had a concept of the "real world" before aging out of the State's system at age 18. It was at this point DFCS placed him in Families First's Independent Living program.

**Families First Solution:** Having lived in State care all of his adolescent life, Clark was unprepared to live on his own. Families First's Independent Living program gave him the chance to prepare for the real world and effectively take on everyday adult responsibilities. The stable housing, supportive and case management services gave Clark a sense of family structure, and allowed him to turn to his social worker and staff members when he needed additional guidance and reassurance. During this time, Clark was also enrolled in college full-time and was working on a full-time basis as well. Families First was instrumental in teaching Clark how to budget and save his money. When he transitioned out of the program, Families First had assisted Clark in building a foundation for every day living. This was extremely important, because as Clark states, "since I did not grow up on the outside world, I was unprepared to do some of the most basic things most people are capable of because they grew up in structured and sheltered lives." The Independent Living program was able to guide Clark in the right direction and make appropriate choices along the way.

**Success:** After transitioning out of the program at age 21, Clark has made remarkable progress. He enlisted in the Army and is currently a Private First Class Combat Medic. He received an Associates of Science degree and is working on a Bachelor's degree in Healthcare Management. In between school and the Army, Clark works at a local hospital in the Med Surg Bariatric unit. His goal is to continue his education so that he will one day become a Physician's Assistant. Clark also has sole custody of his two year old daughter.

***"The Independent Living Program is there to assist young adults in providing a foundation for success in life. I could have been put on the street to fend for myself, but thankfully Families First was there to help me adjust and live in the real world. They really did help steer my life in the right direction."***