

Full Startup Guide: She Nails Healing / Transitional Housing

Phase 1 – Legal & Organizational Setup

1. Ensure Your Nonprofit Can Support the Program
 - Amend your nonprofit purpose to explicitly allow services for 18–21-year-olds in foster care or child welfare.
 - File your amendment with NC Secretary of State if needed.
2. Check IRS 501(c)(3) Status
 - Make sure your nonprofit status is active and compliant. You may need an updated purpose statement for DSS or grants.
3. Obtain a Federal EIN & State Tax Registrations
 - Needed for banking, payroll, and official contracts.

Phase 2 – DSS Approval & Compliance

1. Select Counties to Start
 - Alamance, Guilford, and Orange are recommended starter counties based on population and foster youth numbers.
2. Send DSS Inquiry Email
 - Use the copy we created. Send to 2–3 counties max for initial approval.
3. Prepare Documents
 - Program Description
 - House Rules
 - Resident Agreement
 - Any organizational policies (safety, intake, grievance)
4. Schedule DSS Meetings / Inspections

- They'll review your documents, staffing plan, and physical space.
5. Do Not Take Rent or House Youth Until Approved
- NC DSS requires full program approval first.

Phase 3 – Program Planning

1. Finalize Program Description

- Target Population: 18–21 aging out of foster care
- Services: Housing, life skills, case management, employment/education support
- Outcomes & length of stay

2. House Rules & Resident Agreements

- Make them clear, enforceable, and compliant (no leases, voluntary participation)

3. Prepare Policies & Procedures

- Safety, supervision, transportation, intake, emergency plans

4. Staffing Plan

- Program Director (you)
- Case managers / life skills coaches
- On-call support or overnight supervision if required by DSS
- Volunteer or part-time support staff (optional)

5. Budget / Funding

- Include staff salaries, housing lease/rent, utilities, furnishings, food, transportation, program supplies
- Identify grants, DSS funding, private donations

6. Housing Search

- Only look at approved housing that meets DSS safety and occupancy guidelines
- Consider initial pilot size: 2–4 residents to start

Phase 4 – Marketing & Outreach

1. Website

- Homepage with all youth programs
- Programs page
- She Nails Healing page with PDF download
- Contact / Referral page
- Staff page

2. Referral Partnerships

- Contact DSS caseworkers, foster agencies, juvenile justice programs
- Provide program overview PDF for referral

3. Community & Donor Engagement

- Local businesses, churches, civic organizations for sponsorships or volunteer support

Phase 5 – Launch Preparation

1. Finalize Staff

- Complete background checks
- Train staff on program rules, DSS compliance, safety protocols

2. Finalize Housing

- Furnish units, safety equipment, emergency contacts
- Create intake and orientation process for residents

3. Prepare for First DSS Inspection / Intake

- Have all documentation ready: program description, resident agreements, house rules, staffing chart, policies, proof of insurance

4. Intake First Residents

- Ensure all rules, agreements, and consent forms are signed
- Start case management and programming

Phase 6 – Ongoing Operations

1. Maintain Documentation

- Keep detailed case notes, incident reports, attendance, program outcomes

2. Monitor Program Outcomes

- Track employment, education enrollment, independent living skills

3. Continuous Improvement

- Update policies, rules, and program offerings based on DSS feedback and resident progress

4. Expand

- After successful pilot, consider additional counties or increased capacity

Pro Tips:

- DSS loves paperwork and organization. Keep everything neat, dated, and signed.
- Start small: a 2–4 resident pilot shows success and keeps management realistic.
- Focus on outcomes: stable housing, employment/education, financial literacy—this is what DSS and funders measure.

- Build relationships with county DSS and foster agencies early—they are your primary referral source.